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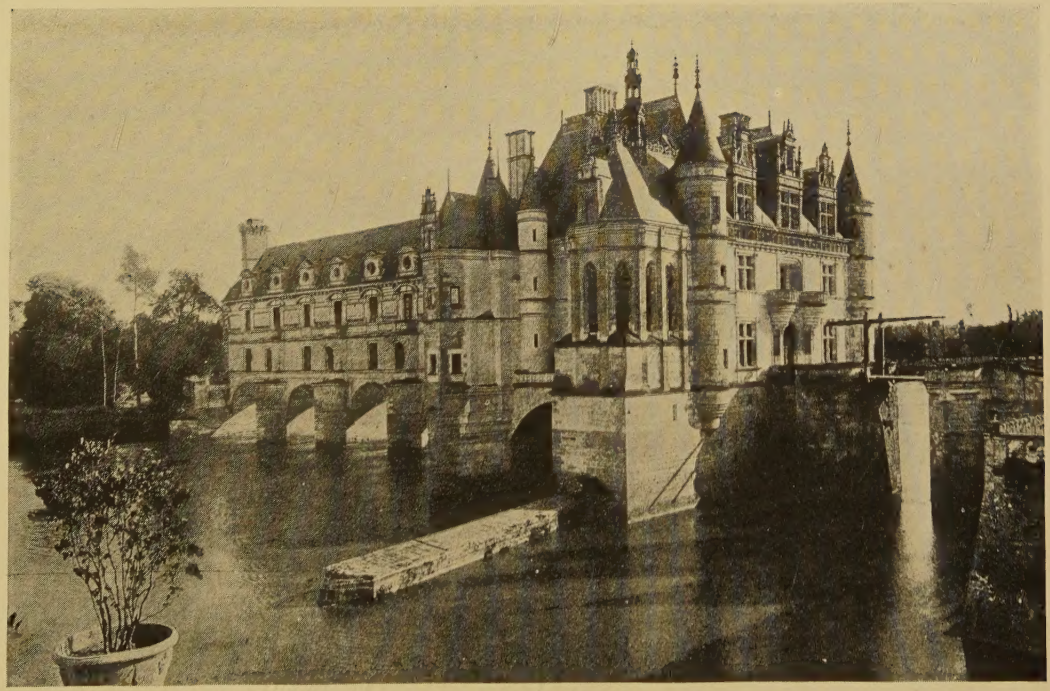

The Château of Chenonceaux

Old Touraine

The Life and History
of the
Famous Chateâux
of France

by

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Preface

"Pour l'instruction de l'Univers Sédentaire."
XAVIER DE MAISTRE.

THE chapters which follow have been arranged on the only plan by which it seemed logically possible to sketch the great amount of history with which they have to deal: it may be as well to point out the way in which they are meant to be of use.

Each castle in the valley of the Loire has a history of its own, sometimes going as far back as Roman times, sometimes reaching forward to the present day; but in each castle there is also some particular event, some especial visitor, whose importance overshadows every memory connected with the place; it therefore became possible to arrange these "moments" chronologically, and thus gradually to unwind a more or less connected thread of history from the rise of the Angevin Plantagenets where Chinon guards the bridge of the Vienne to the last days of the Valois in the Château of Blois. In some cases the story has been

carried on by chapters on the more important personages, such as the earlier Dukes of Orleans or Marguerite de Valois, but anything approaching to thorough treatment of so long a period in one book was impossible. This arrangement of the mass of details which had to be in some way dealt with, seemed to recommend itself both from its utility to the traveller in the valley of the Loire, and from its clearness in the presentment of a certain side of French history to that large portion of the cultivated universe which, like M. de Maistre, is wont to do its travelling at home.

> "Could any spot of earth
> Show to his eye an image of the pangs
> Which it hath witnessed, render back an echo
> Of the sad steps by which it hath been trod. . . . "

Characters will perhaps gain in reality for the reader, scenes may be imagined with a greater vividness, when described in their actual setting. "The stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it."

The materials used have been first and foremost the rich mine of original authorities published in the *Documents Inédits*, the collection of *Mémoires* by Petitot, and the smaller transcripts by Zeller from the Memoirs and Letters of the time, which are in a more portable form and of distinct value. Among

more modern authorities I have referred to the *Histories* of Michelet and of Martin, and the *Analyse Raisonnée* of Châteaubriand; for Chapter II. to K. Norgate's *Angevin Kings;* for episodes at Chinon and at Blois to Yriarte's *Cæsar Borgia* and the Stanhope Essay for 1891; to *Un Gentilhomme des temps passés* and *François I.* by C. Coignet; and to *The End of the Middle Ages* and *Marguerite of Navarre* by Madame James Darmesteter, to whose invaluable suggestions I have been very much indebted throughout the whole work. On questions of architecture, Petit's *Architectural Studies*, the wonderfully complete works of Viollet le Duc, and the *Renaissance of Art in France* by Mrs. Mark Pattison, have been consulted. A list in the Appendix has collected a few other authorities upon various subjects. Much help has doubtless been obtained elsewhere, but it is not wittingly left unacknowledged. All of the guide-books which are published for each château have been freely used, and in recognising my obligations to their various authors I would especially single out the accurate and conscientious productions of Mgr. Chevalier, whose publications from the archives of Chenonceaux are particularly valuable, and lastly, the researches of M. de la Saussaye in the history of the Château of Blois and its neighbourhood.

I am assured that the materials at present collected have never been published in one book before either in France or England; the need for them in a portable form for travellers in Touraine is certainly a distinct one, and it is hoped that the illustrations will still further increase the interest of Englishmen in a province, once an English possession, whose history has so much in common with their own. I have especially to thank M. Péricat of the Rue de la Scellerie, Tours, for allowing me to reproduce several plates from a book of which he has lately published a few copies, and which forms the finest collection yet extant of the best types of art in Touraine. The earlier chapters of Mr. Henry James's *Little Tour in France*, full of happy suggestion and a keen artistic sense, will show the traveller the right way to use his eyes; Mgr. Chevalier's *Guide Pittoresque du Voyageur en Touraine* will give him further details and still more extend his wanderings; Mrs. Mark Pattison's *Renaissance in France* will point out for him all that is most valuable in Tours and in Touraine of architecture, painting, and sculpture. These three books will also give all the information required concerning the town of Tours itself, its possibilities of pleasure, its facilities for locomotion, its unequalled surroundings.

In the Appendix I have inserted a few points which would have overcrowded the text, but which seemed necessary to give completeness to the work; among them is a note on the Library of Tours furnished for me by the kindness of the librarian, M. Duboz. The first division of the Appendix collects some additional points of interest in the town of Tours itself and in Touraine; the second is a list of the manuscripts and books in the various public libraries of the town; the third deals with the numerous portraits and pictures (chiefly of the school of the Clouets) to be seen in Touraine and elsewhere in France and England, that bear upon the portion of history treated; in the last is added a further list of books and manuscripts which may be used where more facts are needed than I have been able to reproduce.

From lack of space much has been omitted that may afterwards appear, should the want for it seem pressing. I have, however, been able to add a Genealogical Table, which includes all the more important families in France who had any connection with Touraine, and a Map which is reduced from the sheets of the French Government Survey, and will show the relative position of the places mentioned, several of which are considerably beyond the boundaries of Touraine, accurately so

called. From this map it will be seen that three centres of exploration should be made by the traveller in the valley. The first, Saumur, from which he can drive to Fontevrault and Chinon, then go by rail to Azay-le-Rideau, and by rail or road return to Tours; the second, Tours, from which three excursions are possible—(1) by road along the Loire to Luynes, Cinq Mars, and Langeais, and thence home by train; (2) by rail past Montbazon to Loches; (3) by rail to Amboise, thence to Chenonceaux, and home by rail; his third centre will be Blois; from here he can drive to Chambord and return by the Château of Cheverny, and the next day follow the road along the Loire to Chaumont, and drive back through the Forest of Russy, past the Château of Beauregard, and so to Blois. Throughout the province the hotels are good, the wines sound, the roads excellent, and a great deal can be done on horseback or in a light carriage; the trains are slow but conscientious, and by the various lines will take the traveller who is wise enough to be leisurely, to almost any place he may desire to visit.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity of expressing my deep sense of the courtesy and assistance so freely rendered me on every side during my stay

in Touraine, and more especially I would acknowledge the great help given me in many ways by M. James Darmesteter; to him and to several friends in Oxford I owe most of what is useful in this attempt; its shortcomings are my own.

Preface to the Third Edition

The necessity for reprinting a third edition, which has arisen within a comparatively short space of time, provides me with a pleasant opportunity of thanking my critics and my readers for many useful hints. When these related only to the correction of certain facts and dates, in a book of many details, I have been careful to embody them in this revision. But the general treatment and arrangement of the whole have remained unchanged, for I am glad to find that in its present form it seems to fill the modest place for which it was intended, and to continue those suggestions of more extensive travel and knowledge which it was originally meant to arouse.

I have to point out one definite addition to the value of the pages just revised. By the kindness of Mr. A. Stowe, of Wadham College, Oxford, I was enabled to reproduce Jackson's copy of the "Bodleian Portrait" of Marie Stuart in former editions of this book. But there is probably no

lady's face which has been the innocent cause of so many disputed "portraits." And a more extended acquaintance with the subject has satisfied me that the undoubted work of a contemporary artist would be more convincing than the Oxford picture.

There are few greater consolations to a busy writer than the discovery that his mistakes are not indifferent to his readers. I cannot better express my sense of obligation to these kindly critics than by making use of their suggestions whenever such an occasion as the present may arise.

T. A. C.

December 1897.

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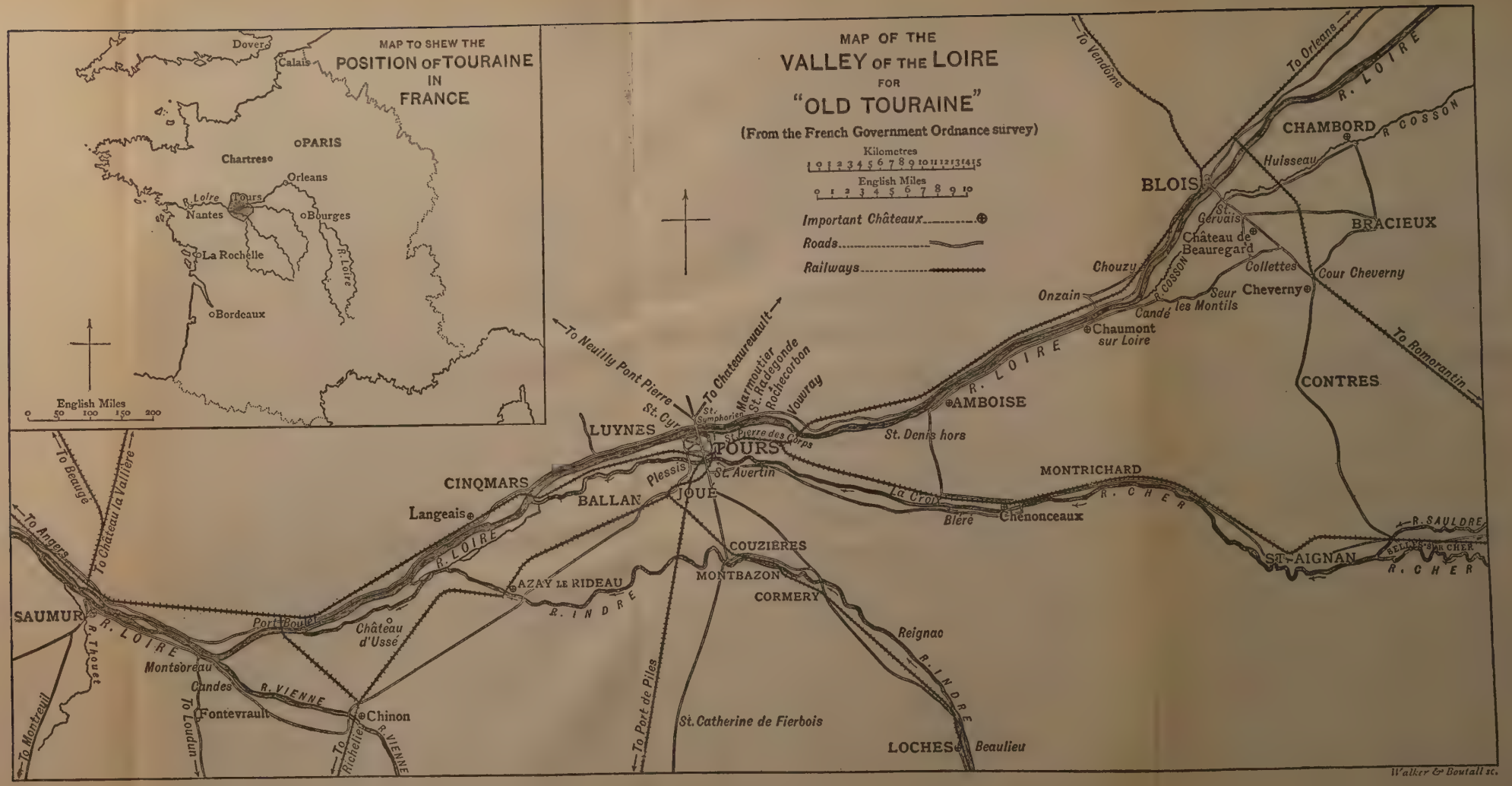
MAP TO SHEW THE
POSITION OF TOURAINE
IN
FRANCE
Dover
Calais
PARIS
Chartres
Orleans
Loire R.
Tours
Nantes
Bourges
La Rochelle
R. Loire
Bordeaux
English Miles
0 50 100 150 200
MAP OF THE
VALLEY OF THE LOIRE
FOR
"OLD TOURAINE"
(From the French Government Ordnance survey)
Kilometres
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15
English Miles
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Important Châteaux
Roads
Railways
To Vendôme
To Orleans
R. LOIRE
CHAMBORD
R. COSSON
Huisseau
BLOIS
St. Gervais
Château de Beauregard
BRACIEUX
Chouzy
Collettes
Cour Cheverny
Onzain
Seur
Cheverny
les Montils
Candé
Chaumont sur Loire
To Romorantin
CONTRES
To Neuilly Pont Pierre
To Chateaurenault
St. Cyr
St. Symphorien
Marmoutier
St. Radegonde
Rochecorbon
Vouvray
AMBOISE
LUYNES
St. Pierre des Corps
TOURS
St. Denis hors
St. Avertin
Plessis
CINQMARS
BALLAN
JOUÉ
MONTRICHARD
La Croix
Bléré
Chenonceaux
R. CHER
Langeais
To Beaugé
To Château la Vallière
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R. LOIRE
COUZIERES
MONTBAZON
CORMERY
AZAY LE RIDEAU
R. INDRE
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SAUMUR
Port Boulet
Château d'Usse
Reignac
Montsoreau
Candes
R. VIENNE
Fontevrault
Chinon
To Loudun
To Richelieu
To Port de Piles
St. Catherine de Fierbois
LOCHES
Beaulieu
To Montreuil
Walker & Boutall sc.

Early History of Touraine

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

EARLY HISTORY OF TOURAINE

"With kings and counsellors of the earth, which built desolate places for themselves: or with princes that had gold, who filled their houses with silver."

THE old province of Touraine very nearly corresponds to the modern department of the Indre et Loire, though in some directions it is rather more extended. It is crossed from east to west by the rapid and sandy stream of the Loire, which flows through it for a distance of some ninety kilometres from a point not far above Amboise to the valley of Fontevrault. The three chief tributaries of the Loire, at this part of its course, join the river from its southern side; and with very few exceptions it is with this left-hand bank of the stream that we shall chiefly have to do, our limits being Chambord to the east, in the department of the Loir et Cher, and to the west Saumur, in the old province of Anjou, the modern department of the Maine et Loire.

In the forests to the north and east of Blois are the Châteaux of Chambord, of Cheverny, and Beauregard; while farther to the south and west is Chaumont looking down upon the Loire, which then flows beneath the ramparts of Amboise westward to the cathedral towers of Tours. Upon the right bank, farther down, are Luynes, Cinq Mars, and Langeais; and the Cher, which near here flows from the southeast into the Loire, has passed the galleries of Chenonceaux, some sixty kilometres from its mouth. The southern waters of the Indre are guarded by the rugged keep of Loches, and by Montbazon farther westward, and finally wind in and out among the trees that shade Azay-le-Rideau, before losing themselves in the swifter current of the main stream. At Candes the river is still further swollen by the Vienne, which after passing the ruined towers of Chinon has flowed by the Forest of Fontevrault to add its story to the many voices of the Loire.

Perhaps no stream in so short a portion of its course has so much history to tell. Until the end of the sixteenth century this part of France was covered with a multitude of châteaux, for beside the old feudal towers, whose strength had saved them from destruction in the happier times of peace, the nobles of later days had raised more elegant abodes,

in which they strove to preserve only what had been picturesque in the earlier fortified dwellings. By the wars of religion and the disturbances of the Fronde a great number of the châteaux had been ruined or defaced: by the line of policy which was begun by Louis XI. and carried on by Henry IV. to receive its full development at the hands of Richelieu and Louis XIV., the old feudal spirit had been finally crushed; even architecture took an entirely different form.

The Court, which for so many centuries had moved to and fro among the pleasant castles of Touraine, migrated towards Paris, and filled the wide walks and never-ending gardens of Versailles and Fontainebleau: the last of the old feudal barons was Agrippa d'Aubigné, the friend and comrade in arms of Henry of Navarre, who kept his fortresses till he left France, and then sold them to the Rohans. By the Revolution the old châteaux were within an ace of being destroyed for ever; the "crown of Cybele" in Touraine lost nearly half its beauty, for with changing times the life of other centuries perished, and "like an unsubstantial pageant faded," though legends of it and memories of it still cling to the ruined walls like the ivy which a kindly soil has lent to hide their falling gateways. It is true that here and again a new life mingles with

the old, but many of the ancient homes stand empty and deserted, or, saddest fate of all, await richer purchasers to save them from destruction.

Chenonceaux is in the grip of a great Paris company; in Amboise, where Abd-el-Kader chafed in prison, where Marie Stuart sighed over the slaughtered Huguenots, no courtly laughter comes again to grace the mutilated halls, for the Orleans princes abode there but a little while, and have left it dead again. Loches seems happier as the seat of a Sous-Préfet, who dwells by the tomb of Agnes Sorel; Plessis-lez-Tours is worst changed of all. The churches of the Middle Ages live on still and have a meaning for us even in their ruins, for the faith that built them is among us still; but the feudal castles belong to a life and a time so different from our own that to understand them at all we must go back to the history of which they formed a part; we must try, as well and shortly as may be, to people these walls that are still echoing with a larger and a fuller life than ours, to realise the men who built them and lived in them, to imagine for ourselves that dead and gone feudalism in the midst of which the youth of the French nation grew hard and strong.

Nor is it difficult to discover a reason for the interest and fascination which the modern world

finds, and will always find, in that old life: we are perpetually receiving pleasant shocks from its astounding originality, from the unexpected nature of its modes of thought and action. An age unfettered by the later restrictions of what is called society, by a morality from which it results that the actions of any given man in any given position can often be accurately foretold, a generation which was innocent of Kant, and ignorant of Herbert Spencer, could well preserve a spontaneity and freshness of impulse, an individuality of method and resource which is as strange as it is fascinating to men of a later and more conventional society; for the passions of its barbarism mingle in curious ways with lighter fantasies of the imagination, with a deeper and more heartfelt poetic feeling. But in this very freedom of the feudal age lay the germs of its decay. The system that liberated the warriors of the time from all the higher bonds imposed by the idea of Nationality had placed in society a principle of anarchy that was incompatible with the existence of a great country, that favoured private civil wars, that made a national resistance impossible, and was the source of the terrible disasters of the Hundred Years' War. William the Conqueror, at the conquest of England, had discovered long before the rest of France the defects of the old system, and had

broken the mould of Feudalism;[1] it was one of the many signs of his greatness that he had done so.

There is yet another fact which, while it adds one more reason for our interest in these early days, is itself the mainspring of much of their hot-blooded impulse and versatile emotion: in no other country have women exercised so great an influence upon politics and the whole life of the people as in France. It has been truly said that they have avenged the passing of the Salic law; but they have done more: throughout French history, even down to modern times, the motto which guides the historian's researches is "Cherchez la Femme." From the heroine of Charles VII. down to the grand-daughter of that Agrippa d'Aubigné already mentioned, their ambition and their influence for good or evil have been exhibited by women who understood better than those of any other nation how to wield the weapons peculiar to their sex. It is the same in later as in earlier times. "The vice of the sixteenth century," says Michelet, "is the unrestrained outburst of its passion, its blind desire for physical enjoyment, which outraged what it loved." The reaction was a matter of course. The skilful wit of woman and her "sweet reasonableness" laid hold upon this strong brutality and governed it. The

[1] C. Coignet, *François I.*

sixteenth century was the reign of woman; from the days when the Pisan girls surrounded Charles's army and melted their hard hearts to tears, to the *escadron volant* of the Valois Court, it is by women that the century is troubled, corrupted, civilised. Even in Merovingian times the loves and hates of Fredegonde and of Brunhilda [1] gave a theme to poets of Touraine, and at the very beginning of the period with which these chapters chiefly deal we have three such opposing influences as the shameless Isabel of Bavaria, the Maid of Orleans, and Agnes Sorel. Immediately after Louis XI.'s death the masculine firmness and ability of his daughter Anne de Beaujeu are replaced by the quiet womanly tenacity of the twice-crowned little Breton Queen. The baneful influence Louise de Savoie exercised over her son Francis was but half counteracted by the gentleness and mysticism of his sister Marguerite: Francis was the plaything of his mistresses. The next reign is indeed the reign of a woman. Diane de Poitiers, Duchess of Valentinois, was ruler of the destinies of France, and powerful enough even to crush the venomous Italian Queen into subjection for a time; but the day of Catherine of Medicis was not long in coming, and for three more reigns her hand was at the throat of France,

[1] See Thierry's *Récits Mérovingiens.*

her influence poisoning its Court. Many more notable women there are—Marie Stuart and La Reine Margot, Gabrielle d'Estrées, and yet another Medicis but little better than the first and far less wise, until we come to Louise de la Vallière, and see among the mistresses of Louis XIV. the widow of Scarron standing apart, "the most influential woman of French history," Madame de Maintenon, who was to be the lawful wife of the King.

All of these has Touraine welcomed at some time or another, to one of its many palaces, beneath the soft sunshine of the Loire valley, where energy and sustained action seem a thing contrary to nature, in the country of Rabelais, the home of Royal favourites, the afternoon-land of idleness and laughter. Here the grass is as green in August as in May among the orchards and the groves. Look across the river at the other bank and it will seem hanging in the air, so faithfully are cloud and sky reflected in the stream. The sands that line the river's bed are fringed with willows bending down as if to sip its waters; poplars, aspens, and acacias shade the stream, where countless little islets break the silver current. As Victor Hugo sang of Bièvre—

"Une rivière au fond, des bois sur les deux pentes,
Là des orneaux brodés de cent vignes grimpantes
Des prés où le faucheur brunit son bras nerveux,

Là des saules pensifs qui pleurent sur la rive
Et comme une baigneuse indolente et naïve
Laissent tremper dans l'eau le bout de leurs cheveux."

A soft and sensual country is it, where the idea came naturally to D'Arbrissel to make a woman queen of his monastery.[1]

Nor are these memories of men and women who have lived the only ones with which Touraine is filled; scarcely less real, and with an added charm from the genius of their creators, are the characters from Balzac, from Rabelais, from George Sand that moved and had their being in the valley—and English readers will before all recognise the scenes in which young Quentin Durward played his part, the postern gate through which he rode out of Plessis with the Ladies of Croye, so soon to be pursued by Dunois and Orleans. Chenonceaux reminds us of " Les Huguenots " as much as of Diana. The halls of Chambord are still crowded with the courtiers watching Marion Delorme, and in the streets of Blois there stands the lamp-post beneath which her lover fought his duel and was taken by the King's officers. There is scarce an abbey in Touraine but finds its own story among the Contes Drolatiques, not a landscape but has its more delicate associations with a Félix or a Lucien, even a Duchesse de

[1] Michelet, vol. ii.

Langeais. The very house where the terrible old maid who tortured the Curé de Tours resided, rises hard by the cathedral walls with the great buttress encroaching upon its quiet garden close. Dumas' musketeers are laughing in the Salle des Gardes at Blois, and the rattle of their swords as they fence upon the staircases is ringing even in the King's chambers beyond; and Athos' house might still be seen, to which Raoul rode out from Blois after a certain stolen interview with a young lady distrusted by his father. Jean Jacques Rousseau has wandered in the groves of Chenonceaux; Madame de Staël has watched the widening Loire at Chaumont. The brilliant pamphlets of Paul Louis Courier come into our mind in the little town of Luynes; at Loches we recall De Vigny's vivid romance and the fall of the unhappy Cinq Mars.

Near Blois,

> "Cette maison
> Qu'on voit, bâtie en pierre, et d'ardoise couverte,
> Blanche et carrée, au bas de la colline verte,"

is the house where Victor Hugo spent his childhood. In endless ways the genius of the place has been embodied and personified. Rabelais is full of touches of the true spirit of Touraine, the life of plenty, and the love of wine, and midday siestas

in the autumn sun of good fat priests, their paunches "with fat capon lined," in abbeys that were his models for the great vision of Thelema.

Such is the Touraine to the early history of which we must now turn, and first to its focal point the town of Tours. If there is one thing for which Tours is famous it is for its soldier-saint and the victory of Charles Martel. In 718 the Arabs, who held nearly the whole of Spain, poured over the Pyrenees into the Narbonese district; they were driven back by Odo from Toulouse and from Provençe, but they sacked Autun not long afterwards, and in 732 Abd-el-Rahman, the commander of the Khalif's army in Spain, took Bordeaux, ravaged Aquitaine, and advanced to the plunder of the rich see of St. Martin at Tours. At this time the town was united with the rest of Gaul, and the vigorous Charles Martel was Mayor of the Palace; he led out his small forces against the advancing squadrons of the Infidels, and between Tours and Poitiers (the exact spot is not known) "the young civilisations of Europe and Asia stood face to face," the scimitar of the Eastern horseman tried conclusions with the broadsword of the West. One of the decisive battles in the world's history was won by Charles Martel; the incredible number of 300,000 Arabs are reported to have fallen with their leader,

and the Saracens were finally driven out of the midst of France.

But there was a Tours before Charles Martel, although its history does not go back (like that of Langeais and Amboise [1]) before the Roman conquest. Its early name Cæsarodunum first occurs in the Itinerary of Antonine, and by the third century it is already a free State, the Civitas Turonum; the inscriptions proving this were discovered in 1711 on the old foundations of the city wall, which are still to be seen in the cellars of the archbishop's palace.

Of this Roman time we can distinguish two periods: the first, some three centuries of ease and prosperity; [2] the second, a time of military occupation, of fighting which was to last for many years, when new walls were hurriedly reared out of the débris of the older and more peaceful town which extended over the ground covered by the château, the cloisters of St. Gatien, and the Archevêché.

[1] Langeais (Alingavia), Amboise (Ambacia), Chinon (Caino), and Candes (Candate) are of Gallic origin. See E. Mabille, *Bibl. de l'école des Chartes*, 3me Serie, Art. "Touraine."

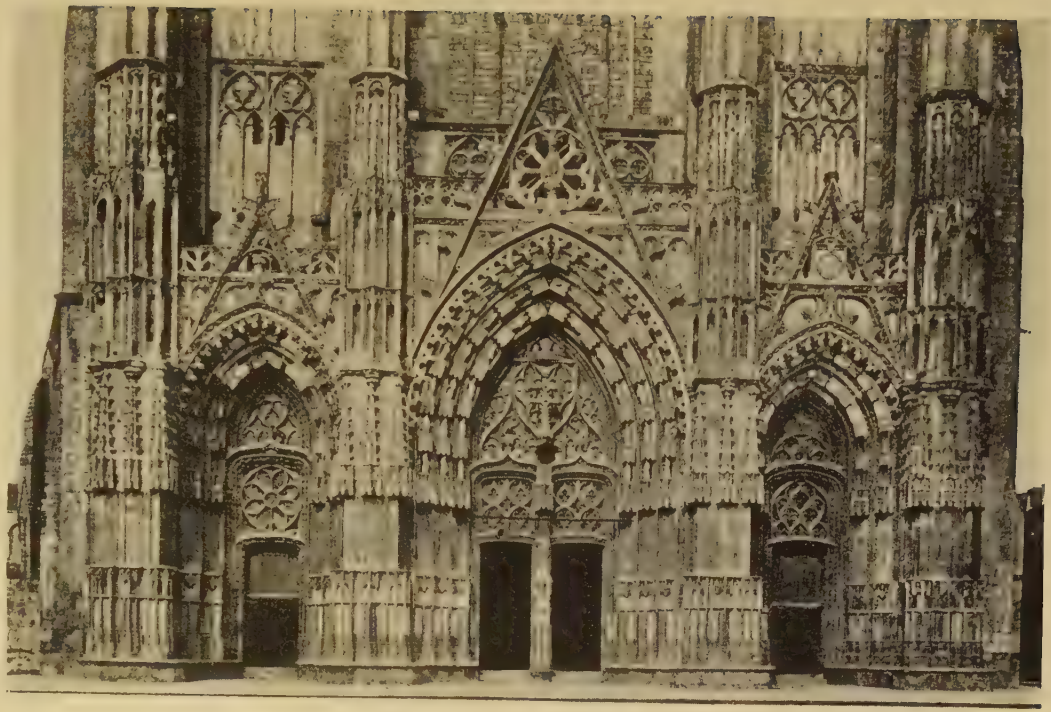
[2] For details of the costume about this period see the carvings on the tomb of the Consul Torinus at Rheims, showing the Gallo-Roman knight going hunting with spear and hound, clad in short tunic and buskin, with the shoulder-clasped cloak, which recalls the memory of the great centurion's charity.

The ruined walls of the fifth century may still be seen, in fragments, with the capitals and carvings hastily built into them, as Themistocles built the first walls that strengthened Athens: they lasted until 1202, with the addition of some strengthening towers which looked out over the vines and gardens that covered what is now the Rue Royale.

This Cæsarodunum was the cradle of Gaulish Christianity;[1] St. Gatien had been one of seven missionaries sent out from Rome to evangelise the Gallic provinces; St. Lidorius, the second bishop, began the Cathedral Church in memory of his predecessor. This cathedral, the oldest foundation in Touraine, was dedicated to St. Maurice until the thirteenth century. The first building was burnt in 561 and rebuilt by Gregory. After the fire of 1166 the present structure was begun in 1170; by 1260 the greater part was finished and definitely dedicated to St. Gatien; in 1426 the twin towers were begun, and soon afterwards the sculptures of the grand façade were finished, but the larger tower was not completed until 1500 and its sister some fifty years later.

[1] It also formed the centre of a system by which the great Roman roads connected and bound together Poitiers, Chartres, Bourges, Orleans, Le Mans, and Angers—in many cases the modern roads follow these lines; there are always traces of the old ones.

The Romans completed the foundation of French civilisation, and then passed away, but the Roman Church remained. Before the end of the fourth century St. Martin, third and most famous of the bishops of Tours, had left the service of the Emperor Julian to engage under the Christian Cross. From every side, and in great numbers, the pagans poured in to be converted to the faith, and the good bishop was constrained to retreat for rest to his little cell at St. Symphorien, backed by the limestone rock and peering down across the greensward to the river, where later on was to rise the noble Abbey of Marmoutier, whose greatest abbot was the famous Alcuin of York. The immense popularity of St. Martin, both in England and France, is evident from the vast number of legends connected with his name upon the Continent, and from the fact that even after the purging of the Calendar his name remained upon the list of saints recognised by the English Church. The first church dedicated to St. Martin was built by his successor; the next, which was burnt in 994, was rebuilt by Hervé in 1014, and only two towers of it remain, the Tour de l'Horloge and the Tour de Charlemagne, in the Romano-Byzantine style, with traces of restoration in twelfth-century Gothic. The tomb of St. Martin was the ancient sanctuary, the Delphic oracle of



Cathedral at Tours

France, the centre of the Merovingian world,[1] where its kings came to question destiny at the shrine round which the Counts of Blois and of Anjou broke so many lances. Mans, Angers, and all Brittany were dependent on the see of Tours, whose canons were the Capets and the Dukes of Burgundy and Brittany, the Count of Flanders and the Patriarch of Jerusalem, the Archbishops of Mayence, of Cologne, and Compostella. At Tours there was a mint for money as good as that at Paris, and in very early times silk and precious tissues were made here of finer fabric than in all the rest of France, until Nantes and Lyons joined the capital in competition with the older centre.

But soon after St. Martin's days, by 419, the Visigoths were in Poitou and Berry, and in a few years the "Tractus Armoricanus" revolted from the yoke of Rome; then the Tourangeaux joining the men of Anjou and Maine entered the great confederacy of rebellion and chased from Touraine the Romans, who by 446 had lost all hold upon the province. Long years of struggle follow between Visigoths and Franks, until in 507 Clovis finally conquered Alaric, and Touraine becomes a province of the Franks, in whose hands it remained with

[1] Michelet, vol. ii. In Carlovingian times this "centre" of faith and activity was transferred to Anjou.

several unimportant changes of ownership for the next two centuries. In the time of Charles Martel the Abbey of St. Martin was in its greatest splendour; there is still a relic left, in the modern library of Tours,[1] of its ancient magnificence and culture, in the Gospel written in gold letters upon vellum, upon which the French kings took their oaths. Half a century later Alcuin, pupil of the Venerable Bede, had been sent for by Charlemagne from Rome to be made Bishop of Tours, and here in his famous school he taught the King's sons, Charles, Pepin, and Louis.[2] In 800, Luitgard, the wife of Charlemagne, the "guardian of her people," was buried in the church of St. Martin.

During the next century Tours was, to her sorrow, again the bulwark of that part of France against invading barbarism, but no Charles Martel was at hand to help, and these new invaders proved more troublesome than the Saracens. The terrible pirates from the North had rowed up the Loire and burned St. Martin's Abbey, and the sacred body of the saint had to be moved out of danger and

[1] See note on this library in the Appendix.

[2] See Alcuin's Letters, *Dom Bouquet*, v. 605. He writes to Charlemagne to be allowed to send to England for some books, the "flowers of British learning; so that they may be found not only in the garden close of York, but that Touraine also may have its share in the fruits of Paradise."

brought back, tradition says, by one Ingelger in 805. The second "reversion" of the same kind occasioned the legend of the saint's body, borne up by his worshippers, having put to flight the armies of the aliens, probably in the actual siege of 903.

At the rebuilding of the city King Charles (the Simple) granted the men of Tours a charter for a fortified borough, subject only, like that of St. Denis at Paris, to its own abbot the Duke of the French. By the side of the old town of St. Gatien, the Cæsarodunum of the Romans, arose the town of St. Martin with its especial wall and moat, the Martinopolis within which Henry II. built his Châteauneuf, and which was only united to its neighbour in 1350 to make a better resistance to the English. Within these walls was the Abbey of St. Martin, where Fulk the Good, Count of Anjou, might so often be seen sitting in his stall next to the Dean. Of the Angevin château, built upon the ruins of the old Roman palace, only the Tour de Guise remains, and a stone preserved in the gardens of the Prefecture carved with what looks like the well-known Pompeian group of two doves drinking from a cup.[1] A still older structure than this was the Tour du roi Hugon, haunted by the legends

[1] This stone has been described with more zeal than accuracy as "the funereal monument of Turnus."

of this mythical personage, which was destroyed in the eighteenth century. By an ancestor of Henry II., the Count Eudes II. of Anjou, was built the bridge over the Loire in 1031, of which some remnants are still left upon the right bank: the present bridge was begun in 1765.

Of the Angevin Princes we must know more. The sketch of later history in Tours (so far as it is not alluded to in subsequent chapters) will be found in the last chapter on the town, which brings its story shortly down to modern days. The Counts of Anjou are the ancestors of the Plantagenets whom we shall meet at our first castle of Chinon, and it is with their extraordinary rise to power and importance that we have now to deal.

The Counts of Anjou

CHAPTER II

THE COUNTS OF ANJOU

"Pugnent ipsique nepotesque."—VIRGIL.

FROM the writings of John, a monk of Marmoutier, and Thomas Pactius, Prior of Loches, we hear of one Tortulf, a Breton, who especially distinguished himself by his bold defence of the valleys of Touraine against the pirates; his son Ingelger, already mentioned in connection with the return of St. Martin's body to the church of Tours, married the niece of the Archbishop and took Amboise as his dowry. But later researches [1] cast some doubt on these facts. The first name which may be considered as historically accurate is the reputed son of Ingelger, Fulk the Red, Count of Anjou, who, whatever his ancestors may have been, was the first of a remarkable line of princes, stamped all with a strong family likeness, with the same characteristics of energy and thoroughness, and endowed with very brilliant

[1] Mabille, *loc. cit.* Salmon, *Supplément au recueil des Chroniques de Touraine.*

and varied natural powers crossed by a strange vein of spasmodic and unreasonable piety or superstition.

The little kingdom of Anjou, given to its first counts by Odo of Paris in reward for their services against the dreaded pirates, was wedged in between the Loire, the Sarthe, and the Mayenne, and in the hands of less energetic owners would have been inevitably swallowed up in the possessions of the powerful Counts of Blois, had not these latter shown as much of irresolution and weakness as their life-long opponents possessed of keen and unwearying activity. Alone of all his race the second Count, Fulk the Good, waged no wars and took but little part in politics: of him is related the story that when on his way to Tours from his own province he met a leper desiring to be carried to the shrine of St. Martin, the good Fulk lifted up the loathsome burden which every other passer-by had refused, and bore him on his shoulders to the shrine, where the leper vanished; and it was revealed to Fulk, as he was sitting in the choir of the church he loved so well, that the leper was the Christ Himself. His son, Geoffrey Greygown, was of a more martial character, and helped Hugh Capet to his throne before he was laid to rest with his father in the Church of St. Martin.

It is about this time that we meet with legends

of an Angevin Count having married a lady of surpassing beauty and somewhat doubtful antecedents, not unconnected with the lower world. The myth is probably an attempt to explain the strange character of the next Count, the typical Angevin, Fulk Nerra, the Black Falcon, who must have been a standing enigma to his contemporaries. In this strange being men saw wonderingly "mad bursts of passion which would have been the ruin of an ordinary man, but which seem scarcely to have made a break in his cool, calculating, far-seeing policy, a rapid and unerring perception of his own ends, a relentless obstinacy in pursuing them." Every town in Touraine has its legend of the Black Count, the great builder beneath whose hands the lower reaches of the Loire gradually bristled with fortresses, that were each one a solid step towards the one dream of his life, the greatness of Anjou. His prowess as a fighter was shown early in the victory of Conquereux, where, in spite of Breton pitfalls, he led his cavalry again and again upon the foe, "as the storm wind sweeps down upon the thick corn-rigs." By that victory he secured the lower waters of the Loire. Farther up he held Amboise through his mother's right, and Loches by his wife, and from both places he dashed out upon Touraine against the power of Odo, Count of Blois, in the

beginnings of a strife which was but the foreshadowing of the quarrel between Stephen of Blois and Henry of Anjou for the English crown.

In pursuance of a steady policy Fulk built his fortresses in a long crescent from Angers to Amboise, cutting out Touraine from the domains of Blois; Loudun and Mirebeau menaced Saumur, the border fortress which held the valley of Vienne; Montresor was kept by Roger the Devil, between the Indre and the Cher, on whose banks was the keep of Montrichard; Langeais and Montbazon threatened Tours. From his high tower of Loches, beneath which his son, the future Hammer of Anjou, was being brought up in a blacksmith's forge, the Black Count looked out across the lands of Beaulieu, lit up by the rising sun, and, in a sudden fit of repentance for much bloodshedding, built there, in 1012, an abbey, which was consecrated on his return from one of several visits to the Holy Land undertaken from the same strange spasmodic promptings of irregular religion. Four years later, after several victories over Odo of Blois, he turned his restless arms from Touraine northward to the lands of Maine: it was a momentous change of policy, the first link in the chain that was to stretch across the borders into Normandy and beyond seas to England, until it ended in the marriage of the

Empress Matilda to Geoffrey Plantagenet. But for the moment farther advance northward was stopped by a resolute attack from Blois, which the Black Falcon checked with his usual vigour. Swooping upon Saumur, whose master was away near Tours, Fulk seized the valley of the Vienne, retook Montbazon and Langeais, and by finally capturing Chinon, reduced all Touraine, except its capital. Characteristically he left the last task unfinished, went suddenly (for the fourth time) to Jerusalem, and died on his way home near Metz. Until 1793 his tomb was in the Abbey of Beaulieu, and can still, with some amount of certainty, be pointed out.[1]

Geoffrey Martel seemed to have inherited his father's warlike capabilities. He signalised his arrival to power by crushing Aquitaine, and absorbing the territory of Maine after the taking of Le Mans: the possessions of Anjou now touched the Norman boundary. Then, taking up Fulk's unfinished work in Touraine, Geoffrey seized St. Julien and attacked the town of Tours, which, after some severe fighting, he finally captured. But Touraine was not yet to be Angevin, and the conquest of Le Mans now began to bear fruit. In 1048 Duke William of Normandy came to the help of his

[1] See Salies, *Foulques Nerra,* pp. 456 *seq.* (ref. quoted by Norgate).

suzerain the French King and attacked Maine; but a rapid change of policy followed William's too evident and increasing power. It is characteristic of the times that some ten years after we find King Henry at Geoffrey's palace in Angers arranging a combined harrying of the Duchy of Normandy. This failed, as it only deserved to do, and within two years both conspirators were dead.

The County of Anjou now enters upon the saddest portion of its history, the times of the Count Fulk Rechin, who for twenty-eight years kept the rightful heir, Geoffrey, imprisoned in the dungeons of Chinon, until the wretched captive lost all longing for liberty or crown. Nor were other signs of this shameful period any more encouraging. The only bright spot in the dark reigns of Fulk Rechin and of Philip I. is the life of Count Elias of Maine, who for a time saved Le Mans from Norman rule. But with the accession of Louis VI., and after Henry of England, by the victory of Tinchebray, had made himself master of Normandy, better days dawned for Anjou with the marriage of the new Count Fulk to Aremburg the heiress of Maine. The next years are years of fighting with Normandy and England, which resulted in impressing the English King Henry more and more with the strength and capacity of his young Angevin rival. At last, in

1119, Matilda of Anjou was married to William the Aetheling, heir to the English Crown, to whom Fulk shortly after left his kingdom before going to Jerusalem.

But the end was not yet. The youth who would have inherited an undisputed power over England, Normandy, and the possessions of Anjou was drowned in the *White Ship* in November 1120. After the first passion of his grief was over, Henry at once took new measures for the security of the succession to the English crown. His daughter Matilda, widow of the Emperor Henry V., was acknowledged heiress by the assembled English barons, and sent over to be married amidst great rejoicings to Geoffrey Plantagenet, the handsome son of Fulk, Count of Anjou. All hope for the new Empire of the Angevins now rested on the issue of this marriage, and Fulk, feeling, perhaps, that his day was over and his work in Europe done, was given the cross by Archbishop Hildebert in the Cathedral of Tours, and said good-bye to his daughter, the widow of William the Aetheling, who had retired to the Abbey of Fontevrault. The rest of his family met him for the last time in the same quiet cloisters, and he went away to fight the Turks and Saracens as King of Jerusalem.

Geoffrey Plantagenet, who took his name from

the golden broom that brightens the wide fields of Maine and Anjou, was of "a fair and ruddy countenance, lit up by the lightning glance of a pair of brilliant eyes;" his broad shoulders and strong frame were graceful as they were strong and active. Nor were his intellectual attainments less striking, in a time of almost universal ignorance among the fighting barons. Within a few years a son and heir was born to Matilda at Le Mans, the future Henry II., who was to overshadow even his father's strong individuality. Two years later died Henry I. The old quarrel between Anjou and Blois arose again, and was to be far keener, for the stake was a much greater one. Stephen, Count of Boulogne, the first layman in England after the King, was the third son of Stephen, Count of Blois, by his wife, Adela, daughter of the Conqueror. At the King's death he had the immense advantage of being on the spot almost immediately after, though such a tempest arose at his crossing from Boulogne as almost rid the young heir in Anjou of his most dangerous rival.

But at first the outlook seemed black indeed for the child of Geoffrey and Matilda. England they had lost, and Normandy was gone too; yet the Angevin persistence won at last, helped by the old unsteady nature traditional in the house of Blois.

In 1139 Matilda sailed for England with her son, to be received by Robert of Gloucester. Seven years of struggle followed, during which the English Chronicle gives a fearful picture of the sufferings of the land, until, in 1146, Stephen finally freed himself from opposition. Meanwhile across the Channel Geoffrey of Anjou had taken Normandy, and had been recognised its duke by King Louis VI. The young Henry was then called back to be given the duchy by his father, who died in 1151. As Duke of Normandy and Count of Anjou Henry married Eleanor of Aquitaine and Gascony (who had just been divorced from the French King), and soon prepared to make good his claims to England against the house of Blois. After crushing at Montsoreau on the Loire a revolt in favour of Eustace, Stephen's son, which had been joined by his own brother Geoffrey, who was lord of Chinon, Loudun, and Mirebeau, Henry found his way made clearer by the death of Eustace in 1153, followed soon afterwards by that of Stephen: in December 1154, on the Sunday before Christmas, he was crowned as King Henry II. of England in Westminster Abbey, without a single competitor, and with the goodwill of high and low.

Henry Plantagenet had "the square stout form, fiery face, close-cropped hair, prominent eyes, bull

neck, coarse and strong hands, bowed legs, that marked out the keen, stirring, coarse-fibred man of business," the man of superhuman activity, above all, whose Court was to be a very pandemonium of energy. His character was a mystery to those who had not known Fulk Nerra and the strange fascination which the clear-headed Black Count combined with unaccountable variations of his temperament; and the puzzled courtiers found yet another character to marvel at in the winning personality and the courageous spirit of Thomas Becket, the unclerical Chancellor. While these two worked together they were the best of friends; and when their interests clashed their hatred was the keener. In 1158, soon after Henry had taken Chinon and all the Angevin possessions from his brother's hands into his own power, a gorgeous embassy arrived with Thomas Becket at its head, to ask the hand of Margaret, daughter of the King of France, for Henry's eldest son. Four years later Becket was Archbishop of Canterbury, and in 1163 he attended, in great state, a council held by the Pope at Tours.

The quarrel with King Henry had begun. After a vain attempt to settle it by the famous Constitutions of Clarendon, Thomas Becket, much to the delight of the French King, was soon flying for safety to a Cistercian abbey in Burgundy. Mean-

while King Henry's power grew and strengthened on both sides of the Channel. In France, Brittany had been subdued by 1169, and the southern princes who had rebelled after the conference at Chinon were thoroughly crushed into subjection. In the next year Thomas Becket, who had been reconciled to his royal master in the "Traitor's Meadow" on the borders of Vendôme and Chartres, met him again at Tours on his way towards Amboise; it was at Amboise that in Becket's presence Henry wrote to his son to enforce the restoration of the archiepiscopal estates. They met once more at Chaumont, and the primate then returned. On the 29th of December in the same year all Europe was horrified by the news of the Archbishop's murder before the shrine of St. Benedict in the Cathedral of Canterbury. The King's trouble at this cowardly assassination was sincere enough, and was soon increased by signs of the approaching disturbances in his own family, which were to harass his life to the end; but for the moment they ceased; between Tours and Amboise Henry met the rebel princes, and agreed upon a general amnesty.

The years between 1175 and 1182 were those of the greatest prosperity of the Angevin Empire; in the story of Chinon we shall trace its gradual fall. These years of peace left their traces throughout

Anjou and Touraine not in donjons or in fortresses, but in palaces, hospitals, bridges, and embankments. A round tower, which stands in the barrack-yard at Tours, is the sole surviving fragment of one of Henry's castles built about this time. The great dyke along the Loire from Ponts de Cé, just above the meeting of the Mayenne and the Loire, for thirty miles eastwards of Bourgueil, was the work of Henry. And the bridge which tradition says was built across the Vienne by the devil for Fulk Nerra when he made his marvellous raid upon Saumur, was in reality the Pont de l'Annonain,[1] a long viaduct built above the level of the floods across river and meadow towards Poitou, to make a safe road from Chinon, Henry's favourite home.[2]

[1] By some authorities called the "Pont aux Nonnains." See chap. on Fontevrault.

[2] For the whole period of this chapter see the *History* of K. Norgate.

Chinon

CHAPTER III

CHINON

"Je sçay," répondit Pantagruel, "où est Chinon et la cave peinte aussy, j'y ay bu maints verres de vin frais et ne fais doute aucun que Chinon ne soit ville antique, son blason l'atteste auquel est dit deux ou trois fois

Chinon
Petite ville grand renom
Assise sus pierre ancienne
Au haut le bois au pied la Vienne.

"Mais comment seroit elle ville première du monde? où le trouvez vous par écrit? quelle conjecture en avez?"

PANTAGRUEL suggested that the derivation of Chinon, or Caynon, as he sometimes called it, was from Cain its first founder;[1] but the stern accuracy of later philologists will have it that "Chinon" is derived from "*blanc*" or brilliant, from the sparkling waters of the Vienne.

In the course of our journey from Tours, where we had left the Loire behind us only to cross the

[1] See Mabille, *loc. cit.* The old name of Chinon was Caino, of Gallic origin. Professor Rhys tells me that in North Wales there is a place called by the Celtic name of *Cain*, which comes from the same root as the German schön. But no derivations are so difficult as those of Proper Names.

waters of the Cher, the slowness of the train gave us more than sufficient time to thoroughly grasp the features of the country, to fully imbibe what Balzac calls " le sentiment du beau qui respire dans le paysage de Tours," where " in spring love flies at large beneath the open sky, . . . in autumn the air is full of memories of those who are no more." Soon we passed Ballan, where in the Château de la Carte lived Jacques de Beaune Semblançay, the unfortunate victim of the anger of Louise de Savoie; we shall hear more of this shameful transaction later on. Then came Miré with its traditions of Charles Martel and the defeated Saracens, then the third river on our route, the Indre, whose winding channels reflect the sculptured galleries of Azay-le-Rideau. We were passing through the country in which Félix found his " Lys dans la Vallée," passing " the long-drawn ribbon of the stream that sparkles in the sun between its two green banks, the lines of poplars draping with the flutter of their lace this valley of the Loire, the chestnut trees that stand between the vineyards on the sloping hills." With due slowness and precision our train at last stopped at Chinon on the banks of the Vienne. The first step into the little square beyond the station gates showed us we had had the happiness to arrive on one of the great market-days at the end of Sep-

tember; we found afterwards it was the most important market of the year.

The roads were closed in with tall trees whose sides were cut with somewhat frigid exactitude in lines parallel to the direction of the pavement; they were full of country girls brown-cheeked and black-eyed, arrayed in the picturesque lace caps of their province; booths of every kind were full of busy traffic; skeleton men and fat women in their fullest glory were disputing for attention with tiny travelling theatres and vendors of malodorous refreshment. No one seemed in any particular hurry to do anything; so, imitating the frame of mind of the inhabitants, we aimlessly strolled up the long straight road towards the bridge that spans the reddish waters of the river. Here the press grew thicker, and round the statue of Rabelais was a gay crowd of buyers and sellers, of laughing girls and chattering children, carts and donkeys laden with country produce, geese and chickens dead and alive, the very scene of busy happiness and careless human nature that Rabelais himself enjoyed and described too, when he tells how Couillatris goes to Chinon, "ville noble ville antique voyre première du monde," to buy oxen, cows and sheep, pigs, capon, geese, and a whole catalogue of sound comestibles. The statue is a far finer production than the one

at Tours, whose face with its eternal smile pleases perhaps at first sight, but soon degenerates into little more than simpering monotony. On the face of the Rabelais of Chinon there is all the possibility of laughter, as there is the possibility of satire; and in this lies the superiority of the statue: upon the mouth of the true Rabelais—the mouth of a cultivated Silenus—there was anything rather than an eternal smile, though none of his time knew better how to lead a laugh and keep it going; upon that face there must have been the traces of the great human feeling, all the love of human liberty which was Rabelais' great characteristic, and which only assumed the cap and bells of Folly to secure a hearing or to be sure of safety. He was born at Chinon in 1490,[1] just about the time when "le pauvre petit escolier," François Villon, must have finished with the world and its troubles. In the historian of

> "Le Grand Panurge et le païs
> Des Papimanis ébahis,"

the force and individuality of the earlier poet had become the Gallic love of life, of health, strength, and splendour, which is the pre-eminent char-

[1] Life, by M. P. Jannet. *Œuvres Complètes de Rabelais* (ed. Jannet Picard). Other authorities give 1483; the date is uncertain.

acteristic of Rabelais as it is of Balzac.[1] We shall hear now and again of Rabelais later on, until Ronsard sings his epitaph in 1553, and a new school of literature begins very foreign in its methods to the cultured strength of the Curé de Meudon.

The statue looks towards a busy little square filled with a throng of traffickers, and crowded with gaily decorated booths: in the middle played the waters of a fountain circled by young acacia trees, and in their shade opened the inviting portals of the Hôtel de France. Only a Yorkshireman can do justice to a breakfast in Touraine; in Chinon the traditions of Panurge's friend, the famous "Innocent le Patissier," are evidently still kept up. We did our best, and were soon leisurely ascending the hill above which stretched the long broken line of the three fortresses whose ruins combine to form the relic of feudal strength known as Chinon. Arrived on the high ground, we passed beneath an iron lantern swung upon a rope across the road, and felt at once that we had left modern France behind us.

In front was the gateway of the castle with a mass of stone towering above it, crowned by a belfry at one corner with its aged, battered weather-

[1] The best portrait of Rabelais I have seen is in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris—a cut by P. Taujé, 1739. Of earlier portraits that by N. Habert, 1699, is best.

cock. Behind stretched the garlanded poles of countless vines peacefully growing within the walls of what was once the castle of the Plantagenets; to our right were various strange habitations scooped in the crumbled earth like the rock-dwellings on the road from Tours to Rochecorbon—strange juxtaposition of cavemen to feudal chatelaines. Like Pantagruel, we were half frightened at the "Caverne des Troglodytes." We might have heard the baying of a Cerberus. . . . No Bacbuc was there to throw us into a poetic frenzy, but the stones before us, eloquent in their ruin, were enough to rouse the dullest of imaginations. This cliff that rises steeply above the waters of the Vienne at some little distance from its banks was, like Amboise and Langeais, some four hundred years before Christ, the home of a Celtic tribe who drove out a still earlier race; traces of these latter are perhaps to be found in the dolmen of great stones about two miles to the east of Chinon, which may have marked the burial-place of a chief. In the writings of Gregory of Tours Chinon is described as a "castrum"—the word he always uses for a Roman fort, and the Romans left their traces here as they have done in nearly all the fortress cliffs which dominate the plains and rivers of Touraine; Roman funeral urns and the remains of bodies have been found that had

The Château of Chinon

been burnt *within* the ramparts, for the Roman Empire had in those days been shaken to its base by barbarian invasions; the Armorican Republic had just been joined by the men of Tours and Anjou, for whom a little later St. Mexme was performing miracles within the fort to keep at bay the forces of Aegidius. Soon after this must have begun to grow that mass of buildings which was still standing in 1793, and whose outlines a map of that date has preserved for us. The oldest remains of Gallo-Roman building are the enormous squared blocks of stone lying in the shrubberies a little farther on from the entrance and rather to the right. A sepulchral stone (still preserved within the château) was found among these remains of masonry, representing a man upright in a large tunic with wide sleeves; above it is the crescent-shaped sign so often found in monuments of this period.

Looking upwards at the whole line of buildings from the town, the arrangement of the three castles becomes apparent. Farthest to the right stood the castle and chapel of St. George, built by the Plantagenet kings to protect the one weak point in a position of almost unique strength and safety, the tongue of land to the east which unites the promontory on which the fortress rests to the line of hills beyond it. Joining these buildings, now lev-

elled to the ground, to the Château du Milieu, is a fine stone bridge on bold archways with carved balustrades that leads to the drawbridge of the entrance beneath the Tour de l'Horloge. The little guardian in petticoats who replies to the traveller's summons for admission still hears him, and still answers his request, through the narrow slit cut in the thickness of the wall that communicates with the room in which the soldiers used to work the portcullis. Following the wall on the left we come to the first range of rooms, the suite of royal apartments opening out behind the high wall with the remains of chimneys at its various stages, which is all that is left of the great hall (on the first floor) where Jeanne d'Arc first met the King. Immediately behind this is the guardroom and armoury, next comes the kitchen, then the common living-room, whose windows are furnished with low stone seats on which to sit and watch the curve of the Vienne as it flows towards the Loire. From the next room, which has a small square bakehouse by its side, descends a strange little flight of steps through a narrow passage cut in the rock down to the bottom of the moat.

This moat is crossed by a stone bridge, which, like the longer one at the entrance, replaced the old wooden structure about the sixteenth century. It

is defended by two towers; from that on the left, built in the thirteenth century, perhaps the best view of the whole castle is to be obtained, while the full sweep of the river below is seen at its finest. The tower on the right is of the same epoch, and contains some of the best masonry in Chinon; it was the old donjon of the castle, and its strong foundations plunge down into the moat beneath in one bold line of massive buttress. Within is a range of prisons, vault below vault, to the lowest level reached. We are now within the Fort du Coudray, the last of the three castles, at the extreme western edge of the cliff; its chief feature is the fine Tour du Moulin, where the mill of the fortress once stood, whose pointed leaden roof and widespread sails must have been a strange feature in the old castle. Along the wall of which this tower forms the western corner are the oldest relics of the twelfth-century buildings.

Chinon more than all other places in this part of the country leaves an impression of antiquity far greater than that of its neighbours; it is easy to people Blois with the gallants of Henry III.'s Court, or the intrigues of Louis XIV.; Chenonceaux tells its own light, uneventful story in every ripple of reflected sunbeam upon its graceful windows; but Chinon, greater in extent than all of them, a very

wilderness of towers and battlements—Chinon is in ruins irretrievably. It would seem as if the movements to which its walls gave birth were too weighty for the nurse that bore them, and the mother of so many royal fortunes has not had strength to live to see the fulness of their destiny. The history of the Plantagenets of Chinon has passed on to the walls of Windsor.

The dense woodland of larches, oaks, and firs which stretches to the north-east, almost to the valley of the Indre, was no doubt one of the attractions of Chinon to Fulk Nerra and to the greatest of his descendants, Henry II. of England and Anjou, whose favourite home in France was here. It remains for us to complete the story of the Angevin kings which was traced up to the highest point of their prosperity. A great change is now to come. With the death of "the young King," his son Henry, in 1183, discord at once broke out between Richard, Geoffrey, and John, the other three sons; a further element of complication was introduced by the death of Geoffrey of Brittany, whose son Arthur was almost immediately claimed by the French King as his ward. The confusion had reached such a pitch that Richard had seized his father's treasury at Chinon, when news came of the great Saracen victory over Guy of Lusignan, which

gave Jerusalem itself into the hands of the Infidels, and Richard took the cross from the Archbishop of Tours.

The would-be Crusaders began operations against the Infidel by quarrelling among themselves at home; amidst a general disorder Richard joined Philip of France against his father, and Henry II., hotly besieged within Le Mans, had but just time to escape from the flaming town towards the Norman frontier. Suddenly changing his direction, in a ride that equalled the legendary rush of the Black Falcon on Saumur, the King spurred frenziedly back to Chinon, while his attendant knights fainted or died from fatigue and wounds upon the way. Then Philip advanced by Chaumont and Amboise as far as Rochecorbon, and proposed a meeting at Azay; but the devil which had helped Fulk Nerra on his ride had entered into Henry after his escape from Maine, a devil of despair and pain that racked his peace of mind while it tortured his body with a fever. Tours fell to the French King, and Henry was unable to move from his room. Then he was summoned again to meet Philip at Colombières between Azay and Tours. By a great effort Henry started from Chinon, and rested on his way at the Commanderie of the Knights Templars at Ballan; there, leaning for support in his

extreme anguish against a wall, he was persuaded to rest for a while by William the Marshal. The meeting was for the next day, and neither his own son nor the French King would put it off. On that July morning two great shocks of thunder from a clear sky put the finishing touch to the collapse of the poor King, who was obliged to be held fainting upon his horse—he signed a humiliating peace.

On his return to Chinon he had just strength left to soundly rate the monks of Canterbury, who had come at this inopportune moment to present their demands; one of them, as he went out, cursed him by the memory of the murdered Becket. That night his Chancellor was reading to him the list of the rebels. "Sire," said he, "may Jesus Christ help me! the first name which is written here is the name of Count John, your son." Then Henry turned his face to the wall, caring no more for himself or for the world. For some days he lay half unconscious, muttering, "Shame, shame on a conquered King." At last he was carried out to die before the altar of the castle chapel. The servants stripped his body and laid it naked on the ground to be covered by a cloak borrowed from William de Trihan. The last rites were with difficulty arranged by William the Marshal. "Robed as for coronation, with a crown

of gold upon his head, a gold ring upon his finger, sandals upon his feet, and a sceptre in his gloved right hand," he was borne across the bridge that he had built to be laid in state in the Abbey Church of Fontevrault; thither came his unworthy son Richard to see the body, which streamed with blood, it is said, as he approached it. Henry was buried before the high altar by Bartholomew the Archbishop of Tours, in July 1189.

Three years afterwards Philip of France, returned from the Crusades, was ravaging Anjou. The attacks on the foreign dominions of England which had been prompted by the news of Richard's imprisonment ceased for the moment when he was released. But in 1193 the attacks upon Touraine had become so fierce and systematic that Richard left England never to return, and made direct for Tours, where he drove out the canons of St. Martin as being friends of the French King. He then blockaded Loches and took it, turned on Blois, and surprised so many valuable papers and cases that Philip was obliged to make a truce; finally, where the Seine bends suddenly to the north, Richard built his famous Château Gaillard with its three lines of defence very much like the walls of Chinon. The fame of the Lionheart, which gains little from his doings in French territory, is still less increased

by the story of his death. In 1199, being very much pressed by want of money, he suddenly heard that a treasure had been discovered at Chalus, and claimed it as the overlord. In attempting to take the castle he was shot, and died from the mortification of the wound.[1]

John, who had been appointed as his brother's heir, hurried to Chinon and was acknowledged King by the royal household. But a counter-claimant appeared in Arthur of Bretagne, who was at Tours with his mother, Constance, supported by the King of France and the adherence of the barons of Touraine. To attempt to foil Constance, Eleanor came out from Fontevrault and took up her son John's cause. A peace was patched up by the Dauphin's marriage with Blanche, niece of the English King. In the next year John, having put away his first wife Avice of Gloucester, scandalised the barons by his marriage with Isabel, the daughter of the Count of Angoulême, and spent the next summer at Chinon with her and Berengaria the widow of his brother Richard.

Discontent grew more and more throughout the provinces. Already had John been sentenced by

[1] In the *Chroniques de Normandie*, a MS. of the fifteenth century, there is a strange picture of the storming of Chalus, showing Richard's wound in the shoulder.

default to lose his lands and fiefs, when Philip in 1201 attacked Arques while Arthur of Brittany besieged Tours, where his small band of knights was reinforced by Hugh de la Marche (the bridegroom John had first insulted) and by Geoffrey of Lusignan, an inveterate foe of the Plantagenets. The next move was to the siege of Mirebeau, whither John's mother Eleanor had gone after her second retreat to Fontevrault. Arthur was taken prisoner by the relieving forces which John brought up, sent to Falaise, and was no more heard of. This was a fatal mistake, for it drove John's rebellious subjects to choose between him and Philip. Their choice was soon made. By spring of the next year the taking of the Château Gaillard drove the English from all French lands north of the Loire; on Midsummer Eve, 1205, after a long and desperate siege, Chinon was taken too, and by the beginning of 1206 the English were finally driven out of France.

In the thirteenth century there was not much of importance that happened at Chinon. The French monarchy, so much enlarged and strengthened by Philip Augustus, was still further expanded by the religion and the higher life of St. Louis, "the most loyal man of his age," whom Charles VIII. and all France of the time looked back upon as their patron

saint, and with whom died the last spark of the crusading spirit.

In 1309 occurred one of the few notable events of the next century at Chinon, the examination of Jacques Molay, Grand Master of the Knights Templars, by the Pope's cardinals in state assembled. The order of the Templars had been founded nearly two hundred years before by nine knights who defended the Temple at Jerusalem. Growing in wealth and strength, the Knights had left Palestine and built their Temple opposite the Louvre in Paris. Strange rumours of the wealth and wickedness of this secret society were rife throughout France, and suddenly the King seized every member of it; the "Procès des Templiers" [1] gives some

[1] In the collection of *Documents inédits sur l'histoire de France*. See also *Revue des deux Mondes*, 15th Jan. 1891, "Le Procès des Templiers d'après des documents nouveaux," Ch. V. Langlois; and L. Delisle, *Mémoires sur les opérations financières des Templiers*. The Knights Templars so unrighteously condemned six centuries ago have only quite lately received the justice due to them; the verdict of Michelet must be reversed in the face of the later facts forthcoming. It seems clear that the chief, if not the only reason for the summary destruction of the order was to be found in the rapacity and indebtedness of the King. From the acknowledged safety of their fortresses in Europe it had resulted that the Templars became the bankers of the warriors and prelates of the troublous times of the Crusades. The wide extent of their connections enabled them to begin operations of the highest value with the Jews and Lombards, and their inevitable rise in power

horrible details of their trial and examination. Meanwhile the Pope, who was in "Babylonish captivity" at Avignon, was made to dissolve their order, many Templars (including the Grand Master) were burnt in Paris, and almost the only remnant of their existence left in France is the name of "Commanderie," which still clings, as at Ballan, to the places where once a house of the famous order used to stand. This particular Commanderie, whose graceful modern rooms are grouped round the little library with its carved ceiling, which is the last relic of the Templars, was inhabited even down to 1790 by the Knights of St. John, who succeeded the old order.

In 1337 began the Hundred Years' War, the struggle between France and England for the mastery which began with the crushing defeats of Crécy and Poitiers. Then came the period of Du Guesclin's victories over the English from 1360 to 1380; but they were nullified by weakness and dissension which ended in the catastrophe of Agincourt. The fortunes of France were indeed at a low ebb; it is from Chinon that the first ray of

and importance was the beginning of their unpopularity. The King who hunted them down was also their heaviest creditor. The only testimony against them was the confessions wrung from the anguish of the prisoners by the torture to which they were mercilessly condemned.

hope appears; the short visit of Joan of Arc, the beginning of that romantic and inexplicable episode of which she is the heroine, is the salient point among all the traditions of the castle. The years that immediately followed Agincourt were terrible years for France. The Dukes of Bourbon and Orleans, fighting in the front rank, had been taken prisoners, and the power of the Armagnac party was still further weakened by the alliance of the Queen (who had been exiled to Tours for her misconduct) with the Burgundian party. The massacres in Paris which followed resulted in the death of some two thousand of the Armagnacs, and the Dauphin himself hardly escaped with life. The so-called "Cabochiens" were filling Paris with bloodshed and disorder.[1] Soon after the death of Henry of England the poor French King ceased the mockery of life that still remained to him; the touching attachment of his people to this crazed monarch would alone show how oppressive was the rule of the princes who were now in power. In

[1] Monstrelet relates the entry of the Burgundians into Paris on 28th May 1418, and the *Journal of the Bourgeois de Paris* gives terrible details of the scenes in the streets during the continual massacres that went on. He describes especially the horrors of Sunday, 29th May, in that year, when the dead "étaient en tas comme porcs au milieu de la boue," beneath the splashing of the ceaseless raindrops.

1422 the Dauphin assumed his royal robes as Charles VII. in Berri, while Bedford and his Englishmen in Paris were shouting "Long live the King of France and England" round the little son of Henry V.

The English had run a wedge into the very heart of France from the sea-coast to Paris, and to this lazy, kindly, good-looking Charles VII. was left the task of turning them out. His defeats at the very outset were so numerous that he was nicknamed "Le Roi de Bourges:" the misery of France went on unabated.[1] The state of the people at this time was frightful; wolves were fighting for the corpses of the dead in the churchyards of Paris, churches were sacked, castles burnt to the ground, the lands left untilled, a hideous "danse Macabre" among the tombs came into fashion, wild rumours of portents and prodigies were in the air. At last in 1423 the

[1] The *Grandes Chroniques* give a fearful picture of these miseries. In eighteen months more than 1500 men had died in Paris. Some monks of St. Denis, seeing men and women dancing to the sound of music in a certain town, asked why they did so. "Nous avons vu nos voisins morts, et les voyons de jour en jour mourir," and they danced for joy that their time had not yet come. That evening the greater part were dead or dying. The actual horrors of the time were reflected in a corruption of morality and dissoluteness of manners which gave the graver chroniclers small cause to wonder that God was chastening France by means of his scourge the King of England.

King came to Chinon with the Queen of Sicily and the Duc d'Alençon to assemble the States-General, to deliberate with his small Court over the small part of France that had been left him by the English, and to receive the Count of Richemont, Arthur of Bretagne, who had offered his services against the enemy.

The evil influences of La Trémouille and the anti-nationalist party had already begun to be felt in this as in other matters about the Court, when in 1428 letters came from Tours praying for help against the English at Orleans, the northernmost point of the Loire and the key to Southern France, which was besieged by Bedford.

The Court was full of bickerings and jealousies, and the treasury was empty, but the States voted subsidies, and in the next year help came from unexpected quarters. The King was in fact very little worthy of the veneration by which that help was inspired, when in the midst of the intrigue and idleness of his Court appeared the strange figure of the peasant girl from Domremy.

Chinon

CHAPTER IV

CHINON (*Continued*)

"La Royne Blanche comme ung lys
Qui chantoit à voix de sereine,
Berthe au grand pied, Bietris, Allys;
Harembourges, qui tint le Mayne,
Et Jehanne la bonne Lorraine
Qu' Anglois bruslèrent à Rouen;
Où sont-ilz, Vierge Souveraine?
Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?"—VILLON.

ON Sunday, 6th March 1429, Jeanne d'Arc came to Chinon, and the well is still shown where she alighted off her horse, and the house of the "bonne femme" who sheltered her. Once within the château she was lodged within the Tour du Coudray until the young King should find time to rouse himself from the caresses of Aloyse de Castelnau and give audience to the peasant girl about whom his courtiers were already disputing.

The introduction to the royal presence, hard enough already for Jeanne, was made still harder by the indifference of that King who had been the ideal of her dreams, by the studied insolence and opposition of his counsellors, and by the whisper-

ings of a licentious Court. She needed all her courage to support the cold and cynical reception which was all she found in return for enthusiasm and offers of victory; and the Chapel of St. Martin in the castle precincts must have witnessed no slight struggle between her reluctance to go forward and her eagerness to fulfil her destiny. The contemptuous trial of her powers made by the King at her very first appearance, the examinations and tests which she was afterwards to undergo, the numberless perils of her position, all must have combined to make her self-sought trial wellnigh harder than she could bear. But "aide toi et le ciel t'aidera" was her unflinching motto, and to the taunting questions of the officers she would only answer, "Les hommes d'armes batailleront et Dieu donnera la victoire." Of her personal appearance scarcely a word has come down to us; that she had long black hair, that after a little practice she could sit a horse in full armour as bravely as the rest, that her chief charm lay in the firm accents of her soft low voice, such are almost the only hints we have of the personality of Jeanne d'Arc.[1]

[1] See in Beaucourt, *Hist. de Charles VII.* vol. ii. p. 218, "Lettre de Guy et d'André de Laval aux dames de Lavale." "Ladite Pucelle me fit très bon visage à mon frère et à moi. Elle était armée de toutes pièces, sauf la tête, et tenait sa lance en mains . . . elle fit venir du vin et me dit qu'elle m'en

Whatever may have actually happened during the period of uncertainty and doubt while she was kept within the castle, some weeks later she left Chinon for Tours clad in complete armour with her followers beside her, and encouraged at last by the full confidence of the King.[1] It does not belong to the story of Chinon to describe how she left Tours for Blois and so to Orleans, where she conquered the enemy as she had promised; how she led the King to his coronation at Rheims; how later on she fell by treachery, the only foe she ever feared, into English hands, and was burnt at the stake in the market-place of Rouen.

There is no fact more astonishing in history and none better established than this episode of Joan of Arc.[2] She was not believed in by many of those

ferait bientôt boire à Paris. Ce semble chose toute divine de son fait, de la voir et de l'ouïr. . . . Puis se tournant sur la porte de l'église, qui était bien proche, elle dit d'une assez douce voix de femme: 'Vous, les prêtres et gens d'Eglise, faites processions et prières à Dieu.'"

At Orleans there is some early fifteenth-century German tapestry showing the entry of Jeanne d'Arc into Chinon. The castle is an impossibility of needlework, but the Maid herself is represented much as she is described by the letters of the Lavals.

[1] See Monstrelet, *Chroniques*, II. lvii.

[2] Quicherat's five volumes, which contain both the "procès de condamnation," and the "procès de réhabilitation" which somewhat tardily followed it, present the best contemporary authorities for the facts.

in power in her time, a time which was still strongly imbued with the principles of feudalism and keenly suspicious of movements in a new direction; in her were personified ideas pre-eminently in advance of her age; that intense "amour de Patrie," which becomes a worship of the idea of Nationality, was as foreign to feudal society as was the doctrine of liberty of conscience; both of these ideas were expressed in the movement led by the peasant girl, and both are arguments as strongly favourable in a later democratic society as they were prejudicial to her in the aristocracy of Church and State in her own time. "Il y a ès livres de nostre Seigneur plus que ès vostres," she says in the examination before the ecclesiastics ordered by the King, and the bishops found indeed that there were more things in heaven and earth than had been dreamt of in their philosophy.

If there is anything more strange than the silence of France while her heroine was being tried by unjust judges and cruelly done to death, it is the almost complete silence, either for praise or blame,[1] which for a long time follows the burning of the Maid at Rouen; but of later years all France seems

[1] If we except the "procès de réhabilitation," and *Le Mistère du Siège d'Orléans* (produced in 1467), which ends before her death, we can find nothing worth the writing about Jeanne d'Arc till far later times.

to have suddenly waxed enthusiastic over this episode in her history; statues, dramas, poems have followed one another in quick succession; it needed the Revolution and the rise of the people to exalt the shepherdess into a national saint. "I never committed the crime," says Southey, "of Reading Voltaire's *La Pucelle*," and we recommend our readers to follow the English poet's example; the untrue picture given of the Maid of Orleans by Shakespeare becomes in the later work a cynically false and distorted libel. M. Joseph Fabre, whose enthusiastic work is one of the most conscientious monographs existing on this subject, draws out a strange parallel between Joan of Arc and Socrates with regard to the visions and voices which the shepherdess constantly affirmed had been vouchsafed to her. The results of later investigations go to show that at the time of Jeanne's visions, St. Michael, on whose assistance she lays especial stress, was particularly in the minds of all devout Frenchmen. The hated English had just received a decisive check among the swirling tides and treacherous quicksands of the rock of Mont St. Michel, on the northern coasts; the patron saint of that strange island fortress seemed to have already begun his defence of French territory.

But such supernatural problems are too wide for us; more interesting is it to trace the gradual re-

habilitation of Joan of Arc in the good opinion of the English, her first and unfair judges.[1] In that opinion she passed through all the stages of the sorceress, the heroine, and the saint. While the first rumours of her presence were still rife in the English camp,[2] came her brief and emphatic letter: "Allez-vous-en en votre pays, de par Dieu. Roi d'Angleterre, si vous n'obéissez, sachez qu'en quelque lieu de France que j'atteigne vos gens, je les en ferai sortir bon gré mal gré." And if the English soldiers thought they had the powers of hell to deal with, they found them no less hard to overcome than any heavenly help. "The Lord had put a sword into her mouth," and even Germany and Italy had recognised its power.

There is no contemporary mention of her in English writings, except a line in William of Worcester. Caxton gives a small page to her in his English Chronicles, in which is mentioned the lie that Shakespeare has preserved against her tainted purity. Historians, whose chief profession was the faith of Christ born in a manger, were equally unfavourable in dealing with the peasant heroine of France.[3] By Thomas Fuller she is still classed with

[1] See on this point a brilliant article by M. James Darmesteter published in *La Nouvelle Revue*.

[2] See *Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris*, année 1429.

[3] In Holinshed, ed. 1577, she is called "that monstrous maid, Jean la Pucell de Dieu."

the Witch of Endor, and it is only in the eighteenth century that the change begins. Then only, when France was "too advanced to believe in God, and not advanced enough to believe in the Divine," the Rationalism of England said that Jeanne was at least not of hell. As Quicherat forty years ago first showed her truly to the world, amidst the horror of the courtiers and ecclesiastics of her time at the flood of faith and purity and truth she poured out upon the miserable pettiness of their depraved ambitions, so Guthrie in 1747 first pointed out how the least tint of falsehood would have smirched her fame, and how she came out pure as fine gold from every proof. The truth had come at last, and from the most convincing quarter—from the country that had least to win in proving it. To Southey she is the one pure figure in a luxurious and selfish age; to Carlyle these "French without heart, mockers forgetting God, are not worthy of this noble virgin," this maid "to whom all maidens upon earth should bend," as Landor bids them.

After Jeanne's death a certain change seems to have come over the King's life at Chinon.[1] From the Tour d'Argentan, in the corner of the Château du Milieu farthest from the entrance, it is said that

[1] The fame of the favourite of Charles VII. has rather obscured the virtue and goodness of his wife, who quietly en-

a secret passage used to wind,[1] by which Charles VII., at that time more worthy of the name of King, visited Agnes Sorel, whose statue rests upon its sculptured lambs at Loches.

> "Je vais combattre; Agnès l'ordonne;
> Adieu repos; plaisirs adieu,"

as Béranger makes him say, and whether owing to the influence of "la belle des belles" or not, the King of 1450 is a very different man from the "roi fainéant" for whom Jeanne d'Arc died.

> "Dunois, la Tremouille, Saintrailles,
> O Français! quel jour enchanté
> Quand des lauriers de vingt batailles
> Je couronnerai ta beauté!
> Français, nous devrons à ma belle
> Moi la gloire et vous le bonheur.
> J'oubliais l'honneur auprès d'elle;
> Agnès me rend tout à l'honneur."[2]

The changed King had turned out his old favourites and replaced them by men like the Count de

couraged all the best influences of the time; see the miniature in *Les Douze Perilz d'Enfer* by her learned chaplain Robert Blondel, in which he presents the book to her, 1455.—*Biblioth. de l'Arsenal.*

[1] No traces of it exist now.

[2] The lines of Colonel Lovelace come irresistibly into our memory with their higher thought—

> "I could not love thee, dear, so much,
> Loved I not honour more."

Richemont and Jacques Cœur;[1] by 1453, after the death of Talbot in Guienne, there were no more English in France except at Calais. In that same year Constantinople had been taken by the Turks, and the learning of the Eastern capital was scattered broadcast in the west to grow into the full flower of the Renaissance.

But even Agnes Sorel could not charm away the troubles which pursued Charles VII. in all his châteaux. At Chinon the Dauphin had been whispering with the Sire de Chabannes, and from the window of his rooms was plotting away the honour of the Scottish guards. Useless to execute several of the soldiers and to expel the Dauphin—one trouble was but followed by another. Heralds arrived with their futile explanations and were sent back in anger, and at last the King with his soldiers wearily set out for Amboise on his way northwards.

[1] Jacques Cœur was "argentier d'icebuy roy de France" (Charles VII.), says Du Clerq, "lequel Jacques Cœur estoit extrait de petite génération sans quelque noblesse. En sa jeunesse il se bouta en marchandise . . . et devint sy puissant par tous les royaulmes qu'il expédioit et même comme on disoit en Sarragie. Il avait fait faire à Bourges une maison la plus riche de quoy on pouvait parler." This house with its motto "à cœur vaillant rien impossible" is well worth seeing; it has been charmingly described by Mr. Henry James.

Jacques Cœur when exiled from the French Court was received with great consideration at Rome, and though he had been fined ten million crowns, yet found enough left to live as

At Méhun sur Yèvre he died, and the news soon came to Marie d'Anjou, the wife he had left at home, that she was a widow, for black care sat behind the horseman and killed him more surely than the arrows of the enemy.[1]

The reign of Louis XI. was marked at Chinon by the arrival at the royal stronghold of Margaret of Anjou. Quitting for a time the struggles between Lancaster and York, this somewhat turbulent Queen had left Kirkcudbright for Brittany and Anjou to get help from Louis XI., who promised more than might have been expected of him. He probably had his reasons. He had already helped René, and the house of Anjou must be still further conciliated by the help of René's daughter. Any diversion, too, that would tend to unsettle the dynasty in England was a welcome aid, keeping the English in a state of enforced neutrality; there was even the chance of Calais being surrendered as the price of help. So, strangely enough, Peter de Brézé, the Seneschal of Normandy, was offered his choice of continued prison or the chances of the

honourably as he had done before. He never returned to France. See Thomas Basin, *Histoire de Charles VII. et Louis XI.*, iv. 26, also Du Clerq, *Mémoires,* III. iii., and Mathieu de Coucy, *Chroniques*, cix.

[1] 22d July 1461; see Mathieu de Coucy, *Chroniques,* cap. cxxv.

English wars, and we find him later on assisting the restless Margaret at the siege of Alnwick, while the strife between the two parties went on as fiercely as ever.

Louis himself did not often darken Chinon with his presence. It was close to here, at Les Forges, in the forest to the north-east, that while the King was at dinner, "luy vint comme une perclusion," and he lost the power of speech. Commines, who tells us of the scene, was sent for, and waited on his sick master for forty days. Other courtiers, who had not been so well advised in their offers of assistance, were exiled from the Court as soon as Louis recovered. His great fear was a loss of authority in his weakness. All the time of his illness the two brothers, Louis and Charles d'Amboise, were writing despatches and arranging affairs of State in a lower room, but every letter had to be taken up to the paralytic, who could barely see or speak, to receive the mockery of his approval. It was at the time of his recovery from this attack that he at last released Cardinal Balue, whom he kept imprisoned fourteen years. His last and fatal illness overtook him at Plessis-lez-Tours.

A more interesting event is the betrothal of Philippe de Commines to Mdlle. de Montsoreau, which took place at Chinon in 1473. It was dur-

ing the strange scene at Peronne, where the craft of Louis almost overreached itself and placed him in the hands of Charles, Duke of Burgundy, that Commines had first learned the extraordinary intellectual powers of Louis XI., with which he seems to have been so much dazzled that he lost sight of the depravity of that odious monarch's real character. Just before his betrothal the historian had passed into France, where "Louis XI. lui fit cet honneur de dire qu'il l'avait bien servy à Peronne." The Duke of Burgundy let him off all debts on his estate, the convenient sum of 6000 livres came in from a jeweller at Tours, and he was richly rewarded by the French King for a loyalty which was frequently held up to the imitation of his companions. That there was a real tie of sympathy and friendship between these two very different characters is seen, if in nothing else, in the fact that Commines was almost the only man who could understand the King's enfeebled utterances during his illness. This keenness of temperament was reflected, too, in the finesse with which he managed all the political affairs with which he was entrusted either in France or Italy.

Among his other rewards he was made Governor of Chinon in 1476, and soon began to take that active part in politics which ended later on in his

imprisonment at Loches by Anne of Beaujeu, who held the royal power for her young brother Charles VIII. "I have ventured on the great ocean," he says regretfully, "and the waves devoured me." But he emerged with safety later on, and the world gained his history, written, it is said, in the hours of his enforced leisure. He was employed by Charles VIII. and favoured by Louis XII., though this latter monarch showed him some little ingratitude, and perhaps rather feared the political experience of a minister of Louis XI. His work as an ambassador, especially in Italy, was always of service to his country; his work as a writer was the only thing of the kind that could have been compared to that of Machiavelli or even of Guicciardini, the first sound attempt at a philosophy of history; and by his death at Argenton, near Chinon, France lost one of her most skilful statesmen and far the best historian of his time.[1]

[1] Montaigne's opinion of Commines is worth recording here. "En Monsieur Philippe de Commines il y a cecy: vous y trouverez le langage doux et agréable d'une naifve simplicité, la narration pure, et en laquelle *la bonne foy* de l'autheur reluit evidamment exempte de vanité parlant de soy, et d'affection et d'envie parlant d'autruy." Montaigne's recommendation of his own essays to his readers could produce no better justification for an author's work. Matthieu d'Arras, a friend of Commines, tells us he was tall and handsome, that he spoke German, Italian, and Spanish, that his memory was prodigious, and his industry amazing.

"Si tu n'as plus que faire en cette église ici,"

says Ronsard, in some lines on Commines,

"Retourne en ta maison et conte à ton fils comme
Tu as vu le tombeau du premier gentilhomme
Qui d'un cœur vertueux fit à la France voir
Que c'est honneur de joindre aux armes le sçavoir."

It is from the Italy that was the scene of Commines' most brilliant negotiations that the next actor comes who plays an important part at Chinon. In 1498 Louis XII., who had just come to the throne, was applying to Pope Alexander VI. for a divorce from his first wife, Jeanne de France. The royal letters came to the Vatican during the reign of the Borgias. Lucrezia was being given in marriage to one after another of the Italian princes as it suited the policy of her unscrupulous father. Cæsar Borgia, who had not long before murdered his brother, the Duke of Gandia, was longing to give full rein to his ambition, to throw away his Cardinal's hat and take up the sword, to fight his way from a successful captaincy to the Dukedom of the Romagna, and even higher honours. The request of Louis XII. came at a very opportune moment. The bill of divorce was easily bought from Cæsar's father by the gift of the Duchy of Valentinois to his son, and a treaty promising equal advantages to

France and the Vatican. In the general interchange of civilities Georges d'Amboise was given a Cardinal's hat, and towards the end of 1498 Cæsar Borgia set out from Ostia for Marseilles, accompanied by the Baron de Traus, the French ambassador, and provided with ample funds for his lavish expenditure upon the way from the two hundred thousand ducats seized from the unfortunate Bishop of Calahorra.

In those days the science of etiquette was very fearfully and wonderfully arranged, and in all their treatises the worried officials at the French Court could find no mention of the reception proper to a Pope's son. The difficulty was evaded without suppressing the gorgeous entry which it was well known the Italian had prepared for himself and his suite. The King went hunting with his Court and met Borgia some miles outside the town; upon the bridge across the river the Cardinal de Rohan was ready to receive the Italians, and headed the procession that started for the castle gates; every detail of its magnificence has been carefully preserved for us.

First came eighty mules in gorgeous harness blazoned with Cæsar Borgia's crest and arms, followed by the finest horses of the prince's stables; then eighteen pages riding, clad in " velours cram-

oisie," two of them resplendent in cloth of gold; more mules followed "still more exquisitely appointed," evidently carrying "the precious documents from Rome," thought the onlookers; after, amid a flourish of drums and trumpets, rode the new Duc de Valentinois and his suite, among whom was the Cardinal d'Amboise. The duke was resplendent in red satin and cloth of gold, and thickly covered with jewels; great rubies were in his cap, his very boots were sewn with precious stones.[1] A crowd of mules, carriages, and litters closed the procession;

> "Ainsi entra pour avoir grand renom
> Ledit Seigneur au Château de Chinon,"

sings the poet whom Brantôme copied; but while the formal welcome was in progress within the royal apartments, the old soldiers who had fought through Italy with Charles VIII. were laughing at

[1] An authentic portrait of Cæsar Borgia is a difficult thing to find. Of the portraits in the Bibliothèque Nationale, a drawing by Lecœur is the best, which is probably taken from the woodcut in Paulus Jovius. The famous description of Cæsar Borgia which Jovius gives is worth inserting: "Faciem atro rubore suffusam . . . oculosque introrsus recedentes, et atroci vipereoque obtutu scintillantes ac igneos ostenderet, quos nec amici quidem et familiares contuendo ferre possent; quanquam eos inter foeminas jocabundus, mira commutatione ad lenitatem convertere consuesset."—Pauli Jovii, *Elogia*, p. 201. 1575.

this new-fledged Frenchman's ostentation, a display, by the way, which Cæsar rarely allowed himself in Italy.

That evening the articles of the treaty were agreed upon—the divorce was granted and the alliance formed against Naples; in return, France was to help the Pope in the Romagna, Cæsar was to receive the Duchy of Valentinois and certain sums down in ready money; better than all, he was to be given the services of one hundred French knights; the *fleurs de lys* of France were to be quartered with the Borgia arms—" c'était lui livrer l'Italie," says Michelet. But what was perhaps nearer to the duke's ambition, the promise of a high alliance, was not so easily performed: negotiations dragged on unwillingly, and when the Court left for Loches in the spring Cæsar was half inclined to return to Italy in disgust; but he stayed a little longer, and at Blois we shall hear how he fared.

The later history of Chinon is not so full of interest; the movement of events passes to the other châteaux, whose Renaissance windows had been scarcely thought of when Cæsar Borgia was in France. The castle is somewhat troubled by the vicissitudes of the Wars of Religion and frequently changes hands, not without suffering from the excesses of both parties. The townspeople of Chinon,

who seem to have shown an extraordinary amount of pluck and spirit in these trying times, were still further harassed by a terrible visitation of the plague; the first attack lasted four years. After the murder of Guise at Blois had still further embittered party spirit throughout the kingdom, and Henry of Navarre had led his forces to Chinon on his way to attack the Duc de Mayenne, who had succeeded his murdered brother in the headship of the Catholic League, the plague broke out again in 1589, and throughout the unhappy little town the red and white crosses were marked upon the doors, and great fires burnt at every thirty paces to purify the poisoned air. A strange glimpse of the habits of the time is given in the records of the rude sanitary precautions that were taken at this crisis: "pourceaux, vaches, pigeons, oies, cannes, ou autres bêtes immondes" are to be kept out of the houses, says the edict, which might have been framed for the benefit of a benighted Irish peasantry; one Matthieu Renard and his wife are charged with the care of the sick at a fixed price.

In the midst of all this distress events outside were following fast. The letter of Henry III. to his wife Louise, at Chinon, reached her after her husband's death by the knife of Jacques Clément; she retired to an inconsolable widowhood in Chenon-

ceaux. The old Cardinal de Bourbon had been summoned from his prison in the castle to dispute his royal title with Henry of Navarre, and died without defending it. Chinon was rapidly entering on the last century of its existence.

The history of the town in the first years of the seventeenth century gains considerably in interest from the careful accounts of its "Receveur, M. Besnard," which have been preserved by M. de Cougny. After the peace this good M. Besnard, whose acquaintance it is quite worth while to make in these records, welcomes with his fellow-townsmen the Prince of Condé. He fires salvos of honour from certain "fauconnaux" placed upon the bridge, which was still in ruins, and presents the traditional offering of fruit and wine, nay, even searches for artichokes to send up to the castle, and "confitures sèches" for the princess—the last refinement of politeness.

Condé was soon sent off to Vincennes, and there was no one now to send sweetmeats to the ladies, for Rochefort, the "âme damnée" of the Cardinal, is there instead, and soon the whole town is cringing to the great Richelieu himself in the full pride of that despotism which was partly forced upon him by the anarchy of Huguenot revolutions. How the delicate but frugal soul of Besnard would have

shuddered had he seen the town-clerk of a community grown recklessly extravagant spend nearly three hundred livres upon a single fête. But it was almost the last that Chinon, either town or castle, was to see. In 1628 the outraged inhabitants with difficulty persuaded Muret, the King's architect, to spare their castle walls; and when Chinon was joined with Langeais, Richelieu, and other estates to the great possessions of the Cardinal, the old castle only bored him, and was designedly left to ruin and decay.

One of the greatest of the feudal monuments was allowed to moulder into uselessness, like the institutions of which it was a remnant, by the man with whose name is chiefly connected the final crushing of the feudal spirit. M. Touchard Lafosse says that in 1758 the room where Jeanne d'Arc was received still stood in its entirety. He publishes, too,[1] an engraving that shows the complete lines of the fortress before the château of the Plantagenets had fallen; but for two centuries the whole castle has been slowly crumbling to its foundations, and it will probably take many more before time has utterly destroyed its mighty buttresses and walls. The stones of Chinon will die hard, but its memories will live, though both are growing older, and perhaps weaker, year by year.

[1] Paris, Delahays, 1856. *La Loire Historique.*

Fontevrault

CHAPTER V

FONTEVRAULT

"Think how many royal bones
Sleep within these heaps of stones. . . .
Here's a world of pomp and state
Buried in dust, once dead by fate."

F. Beaumont.

On a cold winter's morning we started from Chinon to follow that funeral procession of the Plantagenets, which we had pictured to ourselves before, to their last home at Fontevrault.

The road leads straight southward from the town for a short distance away from the Vienne, then turning sharply to the west and north winds through pleasant apple orchards and walnut-trees till it joins the river bank again opposite Port Guyot. Some three or four miles farther on we reached the extreme limit of the Province of Indre et Loire, the town of Candes,[1] where the dark and swift waters of the Vienne mingled with the ice-

[1] M. Touchard Lafosse (*op. cit.*) publishes a very good engraving of the view of Candes from the right bank of the Vienne.

bound current of the Loire. The bright rays of a December sun lit up the circles of broken ice that were swirled rapidly down the stream, and touched the tall sails of the black windmills dark against the sky-line of the western shore, where numbers of little churches between the forest and the river marked the sites of villages and castles long since in ruins. And Candes itself is little like to what it was. Placed at the meeting of the waters, it must very early have been marked out as a place of some importance, and indeed, before 400 there must have been a considerable number of clergy at the church which the famous Bishop of Tours had built here, for in that year St. Martin, being on a visit to the priests, died at Candes.[1] His body was, after some dispute with the men of Poitou, buried at Tours, and the church at Candes was consecrated afresh to his memory. It was no unworthy companion, on a small scale, to that great shrine at Tours, of which but two towers remain to indicate its ancient size and beauty.

In any other country than Touraine such a church as that at Candes would have alone made the district famous, and no greater surprise had encountered us

[1] In 1495 the town had already begun to decrease in size and importance. See Commines, VIII. iv., "La ville (Vigevano) ne vaut poinct Sainct Martin de Cande, qui n'est riens."

than this sudden sight of sculptured saints and battlemented roofs [1] at an opening of the twisting little village street. The exterior decoration of the porch, which is flanked by two towers crowned with machicolations like a fortress, shows signs of the double influences at work during the century when the church was built. The date in the nave is 1215, when it was probably begun; it was finished towards the end of the century, and the sculpture of the figures round the porch, though terribly mutilated, shows signs of the older Byzantine tendencies slowly yielding to the new Gothic art. The fourteen statues rest on a base richly decorated with foliage and strange monsters, twisting round the heads of kings and queens carved with marvellous expression. The decoration is extended up the towers, and seems in many cases unfinished, for in several of the niches simple blocks of stone are left that have never been carved into completeness. The interior of the porch is supported by one light springing column, whose capital branches into the groined work of a roof all carved with statues and strange arabesques. Within the church the same

[1] This combination of church and fortress was not uncommon in the Middle Ages, and was not without its value. The Cathedral of Narbonne, which anciently formed part of the defences of the archevêché, "bristles with battlements."—Henry James, *A Little Tour in France.*

transition of style is observable. The lacework of the foliage upon the double rank of pillars in the nave is in the late thirteenth-century Gothic, while the capitals in the choir are Byzantine. The whole of the interior is filled with quaint and grotesque carvings, many of which were fortunately untouched by the restorers of the seventeenth century. Of the château little more than ruins can be seen, yet it had once a certain notoriety and importance; it underwent a hot siege from Geoffrey Martel, and it served at various times to shelter Philip Augustus, Charles VII., and Louis XI. It was here, too, that Pierre de Courcelles paraphrased the Song of Solomon in French verses to accompany Clement Marot's new metrical translation of the Psalms.

The road along the river bank turns south to Fontevrault at the village of Montsoreau, which irresistibly reminded us of Bussy d'Amboise and his unfortunate Diana.[1] But the place was long filled with more terrible associations. It served as the rendezvous for a swarm of titled robbers, whose exactions from the voyagers up and down the Vienne and the Loire remained a standing source of annoyance to the district until the days when Riche-

[1] It was in the château of Coutancière at Brain, in the Saumur district, that the scene of Bussy's murder actually took place, as it is described in Dumas's thrilling story.

lieu could veil his policy beneath a semblance of benevolence, and relieve the river trade by crushing the feudal rights of Montsoreau. The château must have once been a fine one; the façade is still imposing, pierced with loopholes and supported by strong flanking towers; its massive walls and masonry attest the goodness of the stone in this district; the square quarried blocks still line the quays along the river here, ready to be floated down to Saumur and the west.

As we slowly mounted the hill the first towers of the Abbey of Fontevrault came in sight, and we were soon parleying for admittance with the sentinel at the great door, for the French Government, with its usual love of strict utility, has turned the old abbey into a vast prison or criminal reformatory, guarded by a regiment. The long lines of silent prisoners in their dull uniforms and round caps file in and out beneath the arches where the white-robed nuns in their black veils used to flit softly to and fro; one of the many chapels of the abbey is turned into the storehouse for the garrison beer; lines of great casks fill up the spaces between the pillars that lead from the altar to the door: the strange contrast seemed to strike the keynote of the abbey's history, the history of perhaps the most remarkable institution of its kind in Christendom, and one of

the most enduring, for it was as far back as the end of the eleventh century that Fontevrault was founded.

At this time one Robert d'Arbrissel, a monk of "humble but honest parentage" and a scholar of some mark at Paris, had begun to distinguish himself by the fervour and eloquence of his preaching. So great became his renown that Pope Urban II. especially requested him to preach in favour of the Crusades, which just then were moving all the hearts of Europe. The new apostle met with an astonishing success. He was soon surrounded by crowds of men and women, good and bad, of every age and degree, who left all to follow him. At the head of this vast multitude, which kept increasing every day, the preacher wandered through town and country until his flock of converts became unmanageable. He had started for the Holy Land; his charity was compelled to begin nearer home, and at last in this valley he had to stop and make some provision for his strange and ill-assorted company. The contrasts have begun already, these voyagers for Palestine settle by the Loire; such was the strange beginning of the famous institution that was to shelter the children of kings beneath its roof, and to become famous throughout the length and breadth of Europe.

The Abbey Church at Jontevrault

The queer pilgrimage had ceased by a spring where tradition still remembers the habitation of the robber Evrault, whose stronghold with its conical roof and lantern is still recommended to the wonder of the credulous. The place had a bad reputation, and the owners of the ground found the pious task an easy one of giving up a site to the new colony. Help of more land, of food and clothing, poured in from all sides. The rough clay huts and dividing trenches of the first days of necessity began to give way to more substantial buildings; D'Arbrissel began to draw up rules for his association.

These rules were absolutely different from anything that had been heard of before in such a connection. At Poitiers or at Lucca there may have been a monastery ruled by an abbess, but never was the principle of the superiority of woman so daringly asserted as at Fontevrault. What was the motive of D'Arbrissel in his plans it is difficult and perhaps profitless to conjecture, but the fact remains that the prosperity of Fontevrault seemed to depend upon its Lady Abbess, and to vary in proportion at once to the strength and the weakness of her authority.

But the founder's motto, "Mère voilà votre fils, fils voilà votre mère," was to have a wider meaning still: the mixed character of his first flock was to

be reflected in the future constitution of the community. The first four houses built by the first abbess were for the learned ladies, for penitent women, for lepers, and for monks, and suggested pretty accurately the mingled elements of the first assembly, which had now grown to the respectable figure of 4000. After leaving the strictest rules as to the separation of the sexes, their clothing and their food, and absolutely prohibiting the use of wine ("qui fait même apostasier les sages," say the rules), the good founder died, and was honoured by a funeral at which a great number of his admirers from all parts of the country assisted. The reign of the abbesses had begun; a glance at their names alone, in the list published by M. Malifaud, will give an idea of the importance to which the institution soon attained.

The chief interest of Fontevrault for English travellers consists in the help and protection always afforded to it by the Plantagenets, whose history was sketched at Chinon; these English kings, as Counts of Anjou and Touraine, loved the valley of the Loire, and particularly this Fontevrault, where many of their princesses took the veil. Especially was this the case with Henry II., who built the Pont aux Nonnains, which we have already heard of, across the Vienne, near Chinon, to allow, men said,

an easy passage from the castle to the abbey and its fair inmates, who were already suspected of something more than ready hospitality.

If the visitor in these days is not so fortunate as to arrive soon after one o'clock on Sunday, he will find the military strictness of the establishment very much against his wanderings in search of knowledge. But he will at least be able to see all that remains intact of the fine church whose buttresses and roofs he has already admired from a distance. The carving round the outer arch upon the western wall that he will pass upon his way towards the entrance of the cloisters is particularly worthy of attention, and the extremely fine circle of pillars round the apse behind the great altar is the best piece of architecture in the abbey.

In a dark little chapel in the right transept of this same mutilated building lie the four Plantagenet statues; they are those of Henry II., dressed as he was borne out to burial from Chinon, and of his son Richard Cœur-de-Lion (whose heart is at Rouen). The difference in the expression of father and son is very well rendered; they lie in the middle of the group. To the left is Eleanor of Guienne, the wife of Henry II., who died here in May 1204; she holds a book in her hands. These three figures are of colossal size, hewn out of the tufa rock, and

painted. The last, and perhaps the best of the four as a work of art, is of smaller size and carved in wood which has also been coloured: it represents another English Queen, Isabel of Angoulême, one of the most wicked and most beautiful women of her time. She was the daughter of Aymar, Count of Angoulême, and upon the day of her betrothal to Hugues de Lusignan she was carried off by John of England, who put away his first wife Avice to marry this unprincipled and voluptuous beauty; she bore him the future Henry III. (whose heart was also sent to Fontevrault), and after her English husband's death came back to France to marry her old lover.

These statues, too, have a history of their own. Before 1638 there lay two other figures in the old Cimetière des Rois beneath the cloister of the nuns; they were the effigies of Jeanne d'Angleterre, the Queen of Sicily, and of her son, Count Raymond of Toulouse, who was represented beating his breast for having embraced the doctrines of the heretics. The sculptor had determined that the count should be penitent after death at any rate, and represent the error of his ways in effigy to after centuries. These last two statues were shattered by the vandals of the Revolution, who broke open all the tombs and scattered their ashes to the winds; they had

no leisure to remember that the Plantagenets had built the great dyke beside the Loire and the hospital at Angers, besides numerous other works of public good—Henry II. alone, in time of great famine, supported ten thousand of the poor a day upon his own supplies. The four statues that remained were allowed to moulder into ruins until in 1817 the English Regent asked for them. But the Prefect of the Maine et Loire upheld the right of the province to their possession; the interest and value of the statues had suddenly become apparent. In 1848 Louis Philippe consented to the English request; they even travelled through the busy streets of Paris to the Louvre to be repainted, but on their way to England the famous 24th of February intervened, and they were reclaimed finally and irrevocably by the province in which they now rest after these strange wanderings.

"The eastern part of the Abbey of Fontevrault," says Mr. Petit,[1] "though it exhibits slightly pointed arches, has a pure Romanesque rather than a transitional character. The choir is apsidal, with an aisle of the same shape, and radiating semicircular chapels, which also occur eastward of the transepts . . . the roofs are in general cylindrical."

[1] *Architectural Studies in France,* new edition, revised by Edward Bell.

Mr. Petit also saw a " very curious circular structure of the twelfth century," which is considered to be Evrault's hut. But M. Viollet le Duc conclusively proves that it is a fine example of a twelfth-century kitchen, " cuisine qui existe encore mais qui passe pour une *chapelle funéraire*," a third alternative which only shows how little is really understood of mediæval habits.

But after most of the finest of these buildings had been raised, the English wars that harassed France for so many years left their mark upon Fontevrault too in the dismal times of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth centuries. The revenues of the abbey lessened, the community began to grow poor, dissensions arose in its midst, and the more its abbess was slighted the worse the abbey fared. At last the administration fell into vigorous hands; its restoration, which had been begun under great difficulties by Marie de Bretagne, was carried on firmly and successfully by Renée de Bourbon, " Réligieuse, Réformée, Réformante," as she called herself, epithets which show the change in religious opinion which had come over the country.

Meanwhile the abbey was not without illustrious visitors. Francis I. had come with his mother, Louise de Savoie, and the daughter of Louis XII., to confide his natural sister Madeleine d'Orléans to

the care of Renée, and we find the loyal abbess later on remembering the visit to good purpose by a substantial contribution to the ransom of the royal princes from their captivity in Spain. In the next reign another visitor appeared with the Duchesse de Guise to be shown to the new abbess, Louise de Bourbon; this was Marie Stuart, who was staying near Saumur, and came to be admired and feasted by the hospitable nuns.[1] The Wars of Religion later on left their traces too, and the abbey was sharply attacked by some of the royal princes, who had been offended at some plain speaking of the Lady Abbess to King Charles IX. But the gay young King of Navarre, who had apparently helped in this somewhat foolish attempt, was welcomed by the whole community some years afterwards, when on a visit to his aunt with the Princess of Conti. The records of the feast are still preserved: the prince was prudently lodged out of danger beyond the abbey walls.

A visit of Mademoiselle de Montpensier from her dull Court at Blois is worth noticing, for she relates that soon after her arrival screams and loud

[1] The monks by this time had learned the gospel of good living from the example of Gargantua. One at least, Gabriel de Puits-Herbaut, had read Rabelais to some purpose, for he published a bitter attack against that author and his works at Paris in 1549.

cries were heard from an inner court; she was told there was a mad woman there, confined in a cell and absolutely naked; she went to see at once, and stayed there until supper. The sight was repeated the next day with a new victim, but the day after there were no more maniacs to laugh at, so "feeling bored" she left the abbey. The great Richelieu had been seen here before, and seems to have made some efforts to mitigate the extremely severe treatment of the prisoners, evidently without much success.

But the strictness of old D'Arbrissel's rules was relaxing as time went on and abbesses became more worldly. In 1670 Marie Madeleine Gabrielle de Rochechouart [1] is combining the duties of Lady Abbess with a translation of some of Plato's works which was submitted to the scrutiny of Racine. Boileau, Madame de la Fayette, and Madame de Maintenon were among her friends too. Ideas within the abbey were rapidly enlarging. The last abbess, Julie Sophie, daughter of the Duc d'Autin (the name sounds very modern among the cloisters of Fontevrault), arrived in a blaze of splendour so contrary to the directions of the pious Robert that we can see the final ruin of his institution is hard at hand. On the 3d of September 1767 this gay

[1] She was the sister of Madame de Montespan.

exponent of monastic principles rode into the abbey escorted by fifty carabineers and a jubilant band of hautbois, flutes, and trumpets: in the evening there were fireworks and a big dinner. The abbey had outlived its meaning; the revolutionary edicts swept its inhabitants away, and this last abbess died upon the straw bed of a hospital in Paris.

We left the abbey echoing with the clank of arms and the trampling of soldiers' feet, hired another horse from the little inn across the street, and drove quickly down the hill towards the Loire. The road to Saumur turns sharply to the left along the river banks between the low line of the hills and the sandy marshes of the stream. Farther along, the slopes are dotted with black windmills, perched on their tiny basements with great arms wide-spread to the breeze; and from every part of this strange cliff curl little wreaths of smoke from hidden chimneys, while a glint of sunlight on a window-pane, that opens suddenly within the rock beneath, reminds the startled traveller that the very ground is teeming with inhabitants.[1] We had noticed this strange sight before among the cliffs of Rochecorbon, but never had it appeared so extraordinary.

[1] A traveller along this same road to Saumur tells me it reminded him of the dwellings he had seen in Cappadocia in 1879; he could even "see traces of a columbarium."

"It seems," says De Vigny, speaking of the Tourangeaux, "that in their love for so fair a home . . . they have not been willing to lose the least scrap of its soil, the least grain of its sand . . . the very rocks are inhabited, and whole families of labourers from the vineyards breathe the air of these deep caverns, sheltered at night by the same mother earth which they have toiled to cultivate by day." And near Saumur it is the same; for nearly eight miles along our way these strange earth dwellings kept surprising us, until we could see upon the slopes above us the terraces and outworks of the Château of Saumur, cut in the thickness of the cliff and strengthened by long lines of low wall.

The old "Murus," as this hill was called, honeycombed with human burrows, served in reality as a kind of last retreat and natural fortress to the old tribes conquered by the Roman invaders, and upon this slope grew the first citadel, the "Truncus," rising like a great oak stem above the conquered country, and spreading out its stony roots across the sandy soil. The fortress that now stands above the town, "foursquare to all the winds of heaven," was probably begun by Geoffrey Martel, son of the Black Falcon, about 1040. It shows signs of having been finished at a much later date.

There is an interesting relic of the Roman invaders preserved in the Museum of the Hôtel de Ville, a perfect specimen of an antique bronze trumpet, curved, and with movable tubes to vary the notes produced. But a memorial of a far older race remains in the great dolmen about a mile and a half to the south of Saumur along the road to Montreuil. This dolmen is the largest in this part of France, and well worth a visit from the student of such antiquities.

Yet another river, the Thouet, joins the Loire close to Saumur, and the town lies between the two much in the position of Tours between the Loire and Cher. The two towns are alike, too, in the straight line of road that cuts through them in the same direction as the bridge, which at Saumur is a double one, crossing the island and joining both banks of the Loire. It is a fine piece of engineering, and was begun in 1786. This same island has a queer little history of its own, not without interest.

Towards the middle of the fifteenth century,[1] when the good King René of Anjou was reigning, was formed, strangely enough under his patronage, a little republic of fishermen and labourers upon this tiny Venice on the Loire, a Venice whose sole palace was the Château de l'Ile d'Or, the home of

[1] See the *Epoques Saumuroises* of M. B. Coulon.

the Queen of Sicily. This strange community lived a life apart of hardy toil and independent work, refusing all control save their own rules, and owning no man as their master save the chief whom they elected to watch over the privileges of all and to conciliate their private quarrels. Mock coronations, laughing processions, bright gatherings of men and maidens, gaily went on all the summer in the little island, and even in the days of Louis XVI. an old sailor in the French fleet bore as his proudest title the name of "Roi de la République de l'Ile d'Or." The first "king" was one Faronelle, a royal archer in the guard of Charles VII., who did the honours of the island to René's daughter, the Queen of the Loire, who was to leave her beautiful home and become the unquiet Marguerite d'Anjou of the wars of York and Lancaster. Then she was escorted down the river by this "Doge au petit pied," with a flotilla of boats gaily decorated with draperies and flowers, on her way to meet the Duke of Suffolk at Tours, who was to bring her to her English husband.

In front of the gardens of the theatre of Saumur is the Hôtel de Ville, a very perfect example of sixteenth-century architecture with traces of older work. The transition from the times of war to peace is as clearly marked upon its outer face as it

is on the double façade of Charles VII. and Louis XII. at Loches. Within, the two ages harmonise more perfectly, and the careful restoration that has been carried out here and there completes what is still one of the finest buildings of the kind in the province. Madame Dacier was born in the Rue du Paradis near here, and the memory of Balzac's Eugénie Grandet came to us as we left the town behind and started on the north bank of the river homewards to Tours.[1]

The railway keeps on this bank past Langeais to Cinq Mars, where it crosses over by a bridge from which the traveller has a fine view of the strange "Pile de Cinq Mars," which remains an unsolved archæological problem. The towers of Luynes, too, seen from across the water, rise in a cluster high above the plain. It is quite possible that the tall shaft of Cinq Mars forms part of an old system of signalling by beacon fires, of which Langeais would be the last station to the west, and which flamed messages along the valley past Luynes to the Lanterne of Rochecorbon, and as far eastward as Amboise.

[1] There was also some severe fighting round Saumur and all through the town during the Vendean War: but space forbids my speaking of it, or indeed of many other points of interest in this town, which well deserves a visit for its own sake.

Three Dukes of Orleans

CHAPTER VI

THREE DUKES OF ORLEANS

"Ingenium velox, audacia perdita, sermo Promptus."
JUVENAL.

THE Italian conversations which Philippe de Commines had begun at the Court of Chinon were already understood and appreciated by a considerable section of his audience; for both as Dauphin and as king, Louis XI. had had far more intimate relations with Italy than was generally supposed. But the connection was one of older standing still, and it is chiefly visible in the story of that House of Orleans which had so many possessions in and about Touraine, and from that centre influenced the whole of France. Louis XI. and his immediate successors, Charles VIII. and Louis XII., were far more often in Touraine than at Paris, and the artists of Tours and Poitiers were as familiar with the road to Rome as were those of Paris or of Dijon. Touraine consequently became the centre of the new movement and the home of a strong and flourishing art. By the middle of the sixteenth century

the manufacture of tapestry,[1] which had not appeared as a local industry anywhere else in France, had taken such an impetus in Tours that it seemed likely to replace the art of painting. But long before the centre of the artistic movement changed to Paris under Francis I., the school of Tours had won for itself a leading position among the artists of France, and this not only through the example of emigrants from Burgundy like Michel Columbe, for Touraine never owed much to northern influences, but rather through the visits of its own artists to Italy, such as that of Jean Fouquet,[2] the painter of Louis XI., to Rome, and through the

[1] Mrs. Mark Pattison. *Renaissance of Art in France,* vol. i. caps. 1 and 2.

[2] Francesco Florio, a Florentine who lived some time at Tours, mentions Fouquet in 1477, in a description of Touraine written to a friend, as the best painter of that time in France; and Antonio Filarete praises the picture which Jean Fouquet painted on canvas in the Minerva at Rome, representing Pope Eugene IV. with two cardinals, about 1443. From 1470 to 1475 he was paid by Louis XI. for pictures, miniatures, and the design for a tomb, but his chief patron was Etienne Chevalier, treasurer of Charles VII. and Louis, for whom he finished the copy of Boccaccio's "Des Cas des Nobles Hommes et Femmes," now at Munich, on 24th November 1458, and also a prayer-book in which his taste for Italian architecture is especially remarkable. Nine of the miniatures in the French translation of Josephus in the Bibl. Nat. (Franc. 247) are by Fouquet, and again show the strong Italian influences under which he worked. Examples in England, either of the work of this artist of Tours, or of his school, are the illuminations

many Italian artists who came from Rome by Narbonne and passed through Touraine on their way to Paris or to England. Such a traveller, we may suppose, was the unknown artist who built the château of Bury in 1502, for Florimond Robertet. The shower of Italian influences let loose by the expedition of Charles VIII. did not fall upon soil that was unprepared for it. Touraine and all France were already eager to learn more of the Italy with which they had begun to come in contact. An exact idea of this connection with Italy, even though briefly stated, is absolutely necessary for the understanding of what follows in the history of France.[1] John the Good, King of France, who died in 1364, had a daughter Isabella, who married Gian Galeazzo Visconti, first Duke of Milan. The palace to which the French princess was brought was filled with priests and friars from the Certosa, with professors from the new college, with poets like Geoffrey Chaucer and Francesco Petrarca, with savants like Philippe de Mézières. England,

in the French "Legend de St. Denys" at Christ Church, Oxford, and a prayer-book in the Bodleian Library (Douce, 311). There is also a "Horarium Mariæ Virginis" of 1490 in the same style at Cambridge. See Woermann's *History of Painting*.

[1] See also the genealogical table, especially the houses of Orleans, Valois, Visconti, and Navarre.

France, and Cyprus contributed to the brilliant society of the Visconti's Court, where the young heiress, Valentine Visconti, grew up with a keen interest in all the intellectual life before her, and a quick wit to grasp the advantages of her situation: for it soon became evident that this princess, "wise as Medea," would marry into foreign Courts not only as the daughter of Gian Galeazzo, but as the diplomatic agent of the Duke of Milan. She was a "slender woman,[1] rather tall, with a long neck and slim arms, and a bust both full and delicate. The head is small, the hair parted from ear to ear across the middle and looped in pendent braids above the ear. Under this severe coiffure we discern a serious, gentle, placid face, long narrow eyes, a high forehead, a full mouth with pretty pursed lips."

In 1389 she was sent over "bien joyellée et aornée de joyaux" to marry Louis d'Orléans, the handsome brother of Charles VI. of France, bearing with her the Duchy of Asti as her dowry, nearly half a million gold florins, and the promise of the succession to Milan: it was this last portion of the dowry that was to start the quarrel which never ended until Pavia; but even undisputed Asti was a very important foothold for the French in Lombardy. Valentine made a public entry into Paris

[1] Mary Darmesteter, *End of the Middle Ages*, p. 107.

with the Queen.[1] The good citizens were too much afraid of the wisdom of the Visconti serpent to believe it as harmless as a dove, and this mistrust deepened in later years into a definite hatred; but the kind-hearted young King took to Valentine at once, and kept his liking for her to the end.

Her husband Louis, then but eighteen and Duke of Touraine, was already the first knight of chivalry, and among his many passionless amours could find but little time for this new Italian one. Yet one point of contact the newly-married pair possessed—a common love of literature and art, a love which made them still more repugnant to the rude minds of a comparatively unlettered time. With him Valentine could talk over the poems he had made, or

[1] Froissart gives a detailed and animated account of this entry: "Et encore n'avait la jeune dame, qui s'appelait Valentine, entré la cité quand elle y entra premièrement en la compagnie de la reine de France." The people of Paris also presented her with a magnificent litter, as a wedding present, carried by two men dressed in rich Moorish costumes, and containing gold and silver plate to the value of 200 marks. "Le présent réjouit grandement la duchesse de Touraine, et ce fut raison, car il était beau et riche; et remercia grandement et sagement ceux qui présenté l'avaient, et la bonne ville de Paris de qui le profit venait." Juvénal des Ursins also comments on the prodigality of the display made on this occasion. For a picture of a similar entry in the next reign see Bibl. Nat. (fonds Lavallière, 20361), *Chroniques d'Enguerrand de Monstrelet*, where birds are being let loose along the roads as the King beneath a canopy rides past a fountain guarded by two angels.

the romances of Maître Jean d'Arras; to her he could show, with a full certainty of appreciation, his new *Livre de la naissance de toutes choses*, just bought from Jacques Jehan his friend, or discuss the black velvet binding of his new translation of the Bible with its silver clasps enamelled with the arms of Orleans.[1]

But in 1392 the little leisure Louis gave from politics to literature was interrupted by the news of the first outbreak of the King's madness near Mans.[2] "The King was mad," murmured the people, "and the King's brother was a wizard."

[1] See the catalogue of Charles d'Orléans' books in the Bodleian Library.

[2] Froissart relates what happened.

Early in the hot summer's day, in the forest of Mans, a man dressed in white had suddenly rushed from among the trees to the King's bridle, crying, "Roi, ne chevauche plus en avant, mais retourne! car tu es trahi." The King was much moved; "son esprit frémit et son sang se mêla tout." Later on, about midday, as he rode beneath a burning sun that scorched the sandy road and beat upon his black velvet jacket and the scarlet cap upon his head, a careless page let fall a lance upon the helmet of his comrade. The King, fancying, at the clash of steel, that he was attacked by traitors, rushed upon his brother of Orleans with sword drawn, and was with difficulty restrained from killing and wounding all in his path. At last he lost consciousness altogether. "Et lui tournaient à la fois moult merveilleusement les yeux en la tête, ni à nullui il ne parlait." The same author describes the fêtes at the Hôtel Saint Pol in January 1393, when, in a scene which might have suggested to Edgar Allan Poe one of his most ghastly stories, the King and five courtiers (including the Norman who had

In the next year his illness was increased by the accident of the flaming satyrs at a masked ball, and the people cried out that the old Visconti was a wizard too, and through his daughter cast his spells upon the King of France. But Valentine was far from acting up to such a part. For hours she would patiently sit playing cards with the poor mad King in his dark lonely rooms, and soothe him with the accents of the only voice that he could bear with patience.[1] Even this gentle influence was miscon-

suggested the unlucky freak) came in dressed as savages in rough flax. The Duke of Orleans imprudently put a torch too near this inflammable material and in an instant there was a quick blaze and shrieks of pain. Fortunately the King was not joined in the circle with the other five but dancing separately, and the Duchesse de Berri saved him by wrapping her cloak round the flames, but his reason never recovered from the shock. For a picture of the whole see Bibl. Nat. MSS. Fr., No. 2046.

[1] He had no knowledge (writes Juvénal des Ursins of the King in 1393) of man or woman, save of the Duchess of Orleans; "car il la voyait et regardait très volontiers, et l'appelait belle sœur. Et comme souvent il y a de mauvaises langues, on disait et publiait aucuns qu'elle l'avait ensorcelé, par le moyen de son père le duc de Milan, qui était Lombard, et qu'en son pays on usait de telles choses."

For a portrait of this historian, who was peculiarly fitted for giving a close account of this reign, see the picture in the Museum at Versailles of "Jean Jouvenel des Ursins" (with a long sword and murderous spurs), "prevôt des marchands de Paris, et Michelle de Vitry sa femme." See also in the Louvre, École Française, No. 652, a fine portrait of Des Ursins, who was Chancellor of France under Charles VII. and Louis XI.

strued: the people were wild with terror of an unknown danger, "a contagion of fear paralysed the sources of life." Amidst all this horror and uncertainty Valentine left Paris for the Loire.

Meanwhile the Duke of Milan was sending not charms or poisons but ambitious advice to Louis d'Orléans as to an empire to be won in Adria, and a centre of his power at Asti; and when these plans were thwarted by the King of France, Gian Galeazzo tried to enforce his policy by annulling Valentine's claim to the inheritance of Milan, by double dealings with the Turk, and other questionable methods of Italian stratagem. As a matter of fact, Louis d'Orléans was feeling too strong to need his help, or indeed that of any man. Before his death he was Duke of Orleans,[1] Lord of Valois and Beaumont, of Asti and Vertus, of Soissons, Blois, and Dreux, with many other dignities, and he used his power unthinkingly for his own ends and unrestrainedly, with all the resources of a man of intellect unfettered by enfeebling scruples.

Already an Augustine Friar, Jacques Legrand,

[1] The King gave his brother Louis the Duchy of Orleans in 1391, which had reverted to the crown after the death of Philip, Duke of Orleans. This was much objected to at the time by the people of Orleans, as contrary to former promises, but the gift remained a matter of fact.—*Juvénal des Ursins.*

had boldly preached before the Court against licentiousness of manners, and had greatly moved the poor half-witted King. It was no new thing for tyranny and incompetence in rulers to be swiftly punished.[1] All attempts to reconcile Orleans with the house of Burgundy had failed; he was becoming hated by his own party for the effrontery of his amours, and by the rest for the oppression necessitated by the expenses of his luxury. The downtrodden people prayed, "Jesus Christ in Heaven, send Thou some one to deliver us from Orleans." And a deliverer appeared, if it is just to call a murderer so—John, the impetuous son of the dead Duke of Burgundy. On the 23d of November 1407 Orleans was supping alone with the Queen when a message came that he must go at once to the King. Almost alone, and reckless and gay as ever, he rode through the dark streets of Paris to his brother's

[1] At this time the Queen and the Duke of Orleans were fearfully mismanaging the kingdom during the illness of the King. "Ils étaient devenus un objet de scandale pour la France et la fable des nations étrangères."—*Réligieux de Saint Denis.* At last one was found bold enough to speak out what every one felt and was afraid to utter. "I will speak the truth," said Legrand in his sermon before the Queen, "la déesse Vénus règne seule à votre cour; l'ivresse et la débauche lui servent de cortège." . . . On the day of Pentecost following he preached before the poor King himself, who sat immediately in front and listened carefully.—*Ibid.*

house, when he was murdered by the hired assassins of Jean Sans Peur.[1]

The clever and capricious Louis d'Orléans was dead. In him died the most ambitious of a bold and gallant race; a thinker, a savant, an innovator, a friend of poetry and letters, with an "extreme facility of eloquence," the very embodiment of unprincipled French strength, which, wedded to the Italian suppleness and finesse of Valentine, was to produce the French Renaissance.[2] Valentine[3] was overwhelmed with grief, and she never recovered from the shock. Her two elder sons were sent to Blois to forget their cares in the garden full of rare flowers and in the library, over *The Battle and Destruction of Troy*, or the mutilated copy, bound in red leather, of the *History of King Arthur and the Holy Grail.*

[1] As he was passing the Porte Barbette, eighteen men rushed out on him, and at the first blow cut off his hand with an axe. Then by strength of numbers they forced him off his mule and beat his brains out in the road. His page, a young German, tried to protect his master by covering him with his body, but only shared his death.—*Monstrelet.*

See the shorter account given by Saint Gelais.

[2] See the portrait of Louis d'Orléans drawn by the Réligieux de Saint Denis.

It was this "marveilleuse facilité d'élocution" that was faintly reproduced in the elegant versification of his son, Charles the poet.

[3] See the picture of Valentine Visconti in the Museum at Blois.

Of all her children only the bastard Dunois, who "had been stolen from her," had enough courage for the task of vengeance in the future; that satisfaction in the present was impossible soon became evident. Maitre Jean Petit in Paris had accused Louis of "sorcery, high treason against God, and regicide high treason against the King.[1] Charles himself in letters of pardon to Burgundy, announced that "out of faith and loyalty to us, he has caused to be put out of the world our brother of Orleans." Poor Valentine returned to Blois with Dunois and her children,[2] Charles, the father of Louis XII., John, the grandfather of Francis I., and Philip, Count of Vertus. Here she ceaselessly taught and cared for them, and hoped for vengeance for a year, until her heart broke.

Fortune was not kind to the young Charles in his early days. Apart from the terrible bereavements that had just so suddenly fallen upon him, he

[1] Monstrelet gives the extraordinary accusation of Jean Petit at full length. "Il représenta le duc comme un homme souillé de tous les vices," says the Réligieux de Saint Denis, commenting on this same one-sided harangue.

[2] Saint Gelais adds that her daughter married into the house of Brittany, and was the grandmother of Anne de Bretagne, wife of Charles VIII. and Louis XII. of France. "Or peut chacun considérer," he continues, "en quelle désolation demeura cette très noble dame Valentine . . . tous nobles cœurs en devaient avoir grande pitié." She took as the motto of her sadness, "Rien ne m'est plus, plus ne m'est rien."

had also to deal with a very real distress in money matters, produced by his father's numerous debts, and in 1409 his first wife, Princess Isabelle, died in childbed. No wonder that, amid so many shocks, Charles could not do much. He found himself at the head of the Armagnac party against Burgundy. As a matter of fact he was still merely the standard round which Armagnac (whose daughter Bonne was his second wife) rallied the southern forces. The strange nature of society at this time had produced a series of duels between the great feudal princes, in which a weak and vacillating royalty sometimes sided with one and sometimes with another. In all this Charles could not distinguish yet that his party was the true national party, the party of Joan of Arc and of France. But if his aims were not yet clear to him, his spirit was active and courageous. It is only later [1] that it gave in under captivity, and Charles d'Orléans took " Nonchaloir " for his device, " Insouciance " for consolation, and " Résignation " for his God.

At last, in 1410, preparations began in earnest for war. Armagnac joined in one great national party the lords of Orleans, Berri, Bourbon, Bretagne, and Alençon. In July Charles is at Am-

[1] See R. L. Stevenson's somewhat depreciatory sketch of Charles d'Orléans in *Men and Books*, p. 236.

boise, in December at Blois, collecting money, and the next summer his defiance is sent to Burgundy, and deep offence given to the King of France. But there was a rapid change. The momentary political blunder of his alliance with England was remedied by his reconciliation to Burgundy at Blois, and the years 1413 and 1414 are those of Charles's greatest glory. By the Crown are restored all his possessions, and from the University of Paris arrive learned congratulations. That strange "grace de famille" which Charles pre-eminently possessed completely fascinated the poor King, and the Duc d'Orléans, when he was taken prisoner at Agincourt,[1] was one of the most popular young princes in France.

On an October morning in 1415, when the English searched the battlefield after their victory,

[1] Monstrelet tells us that Orleans was knighted, with several others, just before that battle, after a reconnaissance in force which he had led with the Comte de Richemont. The vanguard, on the day of Agincourt, was led by the Constable, and with him the Dukes of Orleans and Bourbon, the Counts d'Eu and Richemont, and others. Juvénal des Ursins gives an account of the speech in which the King of England in plain terms gives the reasons for their defeat to the French nobles. Those reasons were the misgovernment and ruin already mentioned in connection with Louis d'Orléans. "God," said the English King, "is against you because of your sins." ". . . ils dérobaient tout le peuple et le détruisaient sans raison."

Charles was found still alive amid a heap of dead and dying, and by the next month was safely lodged in the Tower of London, where, with rare changes to other places, such as Ampthill and Wingfield, he remained for twenty-five years. Here, where the Duke of Orleans lost his crown, the world gained those poems by which he tried, with memories of the past and graceful fancies of the future, to lighten the captivity that changed him into the heavy old man of his later life.

In politics his place is a curious one: he was a remnant of the front rank that fell at Agincourt, and by its fall made easier the levelling policy of Louis XI. He was the "Sleeping Beauty of Feudalism," [1] who fell asleep when the great lords were feudal gods, and awoke in a France that had begun to realise the power of royalty. His position as a poet is as strange. His verses are still charming, for he was a poet of no school, and, like so many unknown ballad-writers of the time, sang naturally and easily as the lark beneath the open sky. They were written at the very beginning of the poetic fervour brought on by the Renaissance, and at the very birth of the new art of printing; but they were as little known in his own day as

[1] M. Charles d'Héricault, Preface to *Poésies Complètes de Charles d'Orléans*. Jannet Picard, 1874.

they were recognised by later times, and this because their pure "finesse" was out of place in a century to which Villon only appealed by his intellectual vigour and his popular grossness. In an age when ease, simplicity, and grace were sacrificed to imitations of the classics, his poems were equally disdained by the exclusive and pedantic school, to whom Charles d'Orléans was as "profanum vulgus." The imprisonment that gave their originality to Charles's verses freed them also from the fetters of an Alain Chartier or a Meschinot.[1] The delicacy of his touch may be seen in the lines of the fourteenth Rondeau in Héricault's edition—

"Les en voulez-vous garder
Ces rivières de courir,"

or in the numerous sonnets to Springtime, such as—

"Le temps a laissie son manteau
De vent, de froidure et de pluye;"

or in the sad lines to Old Age (Rondeau ccxci.)—

"A! que vous m'ennuyez, Vieillesse."

Many of these were written in the last years of his life, many (some of them in English, too) in the

[1] Meschinot, for instance, wrote "poems which can be read in thirty different ways, any word being as good to begin with as any other."—*Saintsbury.*

long days of his captivity, in which he lingered on amid vain hopes of release. Henry V. died giving no word of hope. D'Alençon and D'Eu had left their prisons, but Charles d'Orléans refused to recognise the English King as suzerain. It was Jeanne d'Arc who really made the first step towards his deliverance, Jeanne who must have thought of him while she took English prisoners for exchange, and who delivered his Orleans, which was besieged contrary to all promises made him by the English King. But his estate languished without him. Dunois had been captured, and the messenger who brought ill news said nothing of the good work that his friends were doing. Already, in 1427, hearing in the Tower of London of the English advance along the Loire, Charles had feared for his books at Blois, and sent them by the Seigneur de Mortemart to his house in Saumur. They were moved farther on to La Rochelle, until eight years later, the danger having passed, Charles writes to have them sent back to Blois, and directs especial search to be made at Orleans for a cherished little volume stamped with the arms of Berry.

In 1433 he uselessly gave in his submission to the King of England, who, as the grandson of Charles VI., was posing as the real heir of France. But seven more years dragged on before the Duke

of Burgundy, the son of Jean Sans Peur, arranged his deliverance. It was granted now, for the policy of England was at this time to weaken the royal power by encouraging the great barons, as it had been before to weaken feudality by keeping Orleans prisoner. At last his cry was answered.

"Qui m'ostera de ce tourment
Il m'achetera plainement,
A tousjoursmès à heritage
Tout sien seray, sans changement,
Mettroye corps et ame en gage."

His marriage with Marie de Clèves (his second wife was dead long ago) produced enough money by her dowry to bring his ransom within the bounds of possibility. The friendship of Charles d'Orléans with the son of his father's murderer is an interesting and touching trait in this strange story of his release. His dreamy, romantic nature was not made for the sterner necessities of revenge.[1]

In 1440 he returned to France with all the ideas of 1415, and took up his abode at Blois, where his "good fat face," his strong Italian nose and chin, are seen among physicians and astronomers, watching over his choir, listening to the harpers, and

[1] "Or voyez que c'est des jugements de Dieu. Car les pères de ces deux seigneurs avaient été les plus grands ennemis qui oncques furent."—*Saint Gelais.*

reading the ballads that everybody wrote to please him: no one paid the least attention to Charles's own verses, the only ones that were to live. During the first few years of freedom, the time there was left to him from the business of collecting his ransom, to which every one contributed, he spent in happily wandering about and "seeing France"[1] after his long absence, just as some years after he travels abroad and dreamily inspects his property at Asti. He took his pleasures gently; old age was coming on him all the quicker for his long captivity; and he lived quietly in his home at Blois.

"Pource qu'on jouxte à la quintaine
A Orléans je tire à Blois,
Je me sens foulé du harnois
Et veulx reprendre mon alaine."

In 1444 he had the pleasure of leading his own old gaoler, the Duke of Suffolk, from Blois to Tours, where the peace was made that followed the

[1] "Et là (Blois) et ailleurs partout où il passa, le peuple en était aussi réjoui que si c'eût été un ange qui fut descendu du ciel," says Saint Gelais. The same author tells us that at this time Charles d'Orléans instituted an order or livery, called "Le Camail," on which hung a hedgehog, which was given as an honourable badge to several of the notable French knights.

His son, Louis XII., used the porcupine as his badge, which is still carved on the walls of the Château of Blois.

marriage of Marguerite d'Anjou, and Charles seems to have celebrated the occasion with much light-heartedness.

> "Durant les trèves d'Angleterre
> Qui ont esté faittes à Tours,
> Par bon conseil, avec Amours
> J'ai prins abstinence de guerre."

But he found himself compelled at last to go abroad. In 1422, John and Charles d'Orléans being both in prison and Henry VI. of England crowned King of France, Asti had sent for protection to Filippo Maria Visconti, Duke of Milan. Three years before Charles's deliverance Francesco Sforza was in possession at Asti as lieutenant; but shortly afterwards Dunois went out to carry on negotiations and open up the quarrel afresh. The old Duke of Milan wearily got rid of him; but another factor appeared in the Dauphin Louis, whose alliance with Milan soon became clear, and Dunois, enraged, insisted on Asti being immediately given up; this was done, for Francesco Sforza was playing for the higher stake of Milan, after the duke's death, against the unexpected heir, Alfonso of Arragon, King of Naples. Then Charles d'Orléans himself came out to Asti, but only to make promises to Venice, to lay great stress on the real friendship

between himself and Burgundy, and to do nothing more practical than rhyming verses with Antonio Artesano. The hesitation of Charles gave Francesco Sforza his opportunity; he rode into starving Milan with his soldiers' armour hidden by the welcome loaves of bread, and took the city. This was as unwelcome to the Dauphin as its occupation by Charles d'Orléans would have been, but a sudden rise of independent spirit repulsed for a time the French claims on Milan and on Genoa too.

Charles had gone home again with much new learning in Italian rhymes and fashions, many new ideas on dress and arms and architecture, which were to be worked out as opportunity should serve at his own Court. There was great economy in this quiet little household at Blois, but it was soon lighted up by the presence of young Pierre de Bourbon, who was adopted into the family. In 1457 a daughter, Marie, was most unexpectedly born to the house of Orleans, and among the first congratulations were the verses of the poet Villon, who, until 1465, probably enjoyed the protection of the Duke. He sings of the young princess [1] with various tags of Latin such as Charles himself loved to put into his rhymes, feeling a little constrained at the sudden

[1] Of Charles's two daughters, one married the Comte de Foix, the other was an Abbess of Fontevrault.

change from his usual vigorous language to the phrases of a courtly salutation. But a still greater astonishment was to come.

In 1462 Charles was receiving the amused and delighted congratulations of the whole of France at the birth of the young son who was to become Louis XII. This event was not only startling but positively distasteful to Louis XI., who had quite looked forward to quietly absorbing [1] the possessions of the heirless Duke of Orleans into the Crown domain, and indeed came to Blois that very year to try and get Asti from him. But he failed, and the elegant and picturesque life at the château went on gravely and quietly as ever, amid a twittering of ballads and the sound of minstrels' singing, while his friends, René d'Anjou, Robertet, Jacques de la Trémouille, or Boulainvilliers came and played chess [2] with the old duke, or wrote him playful roundels, until at seventy-four years of age Charles

[1] Compare the policy of the same King later on in marrying this very child Louis to Jeanne de France, with the expressed desire of bringing the line of Orleans to an end.

[2] From a miniature in a fifteenth-century MS., "Les Trois Ages de l'Homme," supposed to be by Estienne Porchier, we can imagine what a game of chess looked like at this time. Four men are standing round the board and watching, one player with his piece lifted waits while he thinks over his move. This player has been thought to be Louis XI. in one of the rooms at Plessis-lez-Tours.

died, "in all the practices of Christian charity," at Amboise.[1]

The young Louis d'Orléans had been told by his mother of the claims of Valentine Visconti; but the influence of the house of Orleans in Italy, especially after Dunois' death, was very weak, and for some time young Louis himself felt the pressure of the King's policy of consistently weakening the noble houses, until he was forced into marrying the deformed Jeanne de France much against his will.[2] But at twenty we hear of him as the best archer, horseman, and man-at-arms at Court, and when, some ten years later, the pressure on him was relieved by the death of Louis XI., he at once began to flourish and grow strong in spite of the opposition of Anne de Beaujeu, Regent for the young Charles VIII. But Anne was too capable to be lightly put aside. With all her father's vigour and astuteness, she favoured the cause of civil war in England, she encouraged revolt in Flanders, and having shaken off possible foreign foes, she hurled the royal army commanded by La Trémouille against the Breton, German, and English forces of the Duke of Orleans, conquered him at Saint Aubin

[1] See the portrait of Charles d'Orléans by Rulmann, after a miniature on vellum in the Bibliothèque Royale.

[2] She was "sterile, brutta e quasi uno mostro," says Guicciardini, *Storia Fiorentina* (*opere inedite*, vol. iii.), p. 183.

du Cormier,[1] and threw him into prison. But Louis had not allowed schemes of revolt to take up all his days in Brittany: he found time to make love to the ambitious little heiress, Anne de Bretagne, who had been by no means satisfied with her marriage by proxy to the Emperor Maximilian.[2] This was not unknown to Anne de Beaujeu, and Louis d'Orléans was offered his freedom if he could arrange a marriage between Charles VIII. and Anne. He accomplished this somewhat delicate mission successfully, and returned home, to the warlike Court of Charles VIII., where the cautious Maréchal de Gié was vainly striving to suppress the military aspirations of the King.

These dreams of conquest were further encouraged by the embassy of Venice asking for help against Naples, Milan, and Ferrara. The policy of Louis XI. began to bear fruit. Louis d'Orléans himself had already been offered Milan in the place of Ludovico il Moro, who had seized the Regency, but this offer at first came to nothing amid the constant changes of Italian intrigue. At last, in 1494, Ludovico was hailed Duke of Milan, and called in the French to help him, adroitly reminding Charles

[1] See *Mémoires de la Trémouille*, xiv. 140.

[2] "L'envoyé imperial (un maigre seigneur allemand) plaça, selon l'usage, sa jambe nue dans le lit de la jeune Duchesse. Mais Madame Anne ne fut pas contente."—*Coigner.*

of the old claim to Naples.[1] In this extraordinary Italian expedition Orleans met Charles at Asti, and was obliged to stay there ill near Il Moro, who was trying to guide this tempestuous invasion that seemed likely to have far more success than he had bargained for. Knowing that his claims would not be allowed, but encouraged by secret offers of help from Venice, Orleans soon began to claim Milan for himself; but Ludovico Sforza's subtle policy necessitated not only the revoking of the imperial letters with which Il Moro had provided himself, but quite new letters establishing the Visconti claim. Sforza's title had been gravely recognised, too, in Venice before the imperial ambassadors. Nothing remained but an appeal to arms. So, quite contrary to orders, Orleans sent twenty knights forward suddenly to occupy Novara, and before the month was out had seized the town. His next step should have been an immediate attack on Milan, but he foolishly waited till Milan was protected and

[1] It is impossible to give in one short chapter all the tortuous changes of Italian politics at this time. The actual state of affairs at the beginning of 1494 was, that Ludovico was Regent of the infant heir to the Duchy of Milan, his nephew. Wishing to strengthen his position, he called in the French, and crushed what weak claims could be opposed to his assuming the actual title of duke by obtaining an imperial letter in his own favour. See Commines (vii. 6), who had his information from the Venetian ambassador.

Novara closely surrounded by the enemy. Three fearful months of siege followed, in which the duke endeared himself to his soldiers by his brave endurance of the same privations as themselves. At last he was released by composition, and to his disgust his claim was left unsupported by the King.[1]

A year after Charles would have sent him out again, but Louis saw the prospect of a higher stake at home, for the Dauphin had just died. Ambassadors to Amboise from Florence, asking for help

[1] Commines tells the whole story of this impolitic business of Novara. The Duke of Orleans, when Louis XII., often showed signs of an incapacity for foreign politics and strategy, which he only redeemed by the excellence of his government at home. The taking of Novara was against orders. "Et avoit esté escrit," says Commines, "à mon seigneur d'Orléans, et aux capitaines, qu'ils n'entreprissent riens contre le duc de Milan, mais seulement entendissent à garder Ast."—VIII. iii.

After the town was taken no proper provision for a siege was made, no consideration given to the unsafe position of the place itself: "car elle est à dix lieues de Milan et estoit force que l'un (Duke of Milan or Orleans) eut tout."—VIII. ix. The sufferings of the garrison from hunger were terrible: "on n'avoit vu de longtemps si grosses nécessités; et cent ans avant que fussions nés, ne souffrirent gens si grande faim comme ils souffrirent léans."—VIII. ix. . . . "il mourut bien deux milles hommes, que de faim que de maladie."

Nor could Orleans fairly complain, after the treaty that had been made with some difficulty for his release, that the King was in no hurry to do more for a subordinate whose rash action had seriously inconvenienced him at the moment, and was to lead to yet more trouble in the future. On the mistakes of Louis XII. in Italy see Machiavelli, *Prince,* cap. iii.

against Milan, could no better persuade him, for now the King himself was ill. On the 8th of April 1498 he heard the soldiers round his courtyard at Blois crying, "Vive Louis XII.!"

The Italian claims were forgotten for the moment, but were soon to be revived. The snake of Italy seemed to have a terrible fascination for the hard-headed Frenchmen, who all the time half dreaded the nation whose influences they were so fast absorbing—and these influences grew year by year, from the first touch of the pure early Renaissance brought by Louis d'Orléans, until the days when Francis I., with Italian blood in his veins from both sides of his house, flooded France with the influences of the later spirit that was but a decaying remnant of the old fresh impulses, that brought a Catherine de Medicis instead of a Valentine Visconti.

Loches

CHAPTER VII

LOCHES

" Tant d'allées et tant de venues,
Tant d'entreprises incongnues,
Appoinctemens rompus, cassez,
Traysons secrettes et congnues,
Mourir de fièvres continues,
Bruvaiges et boucons brassez,
Blancz scellez en secret passez! "

GRINGOIRE,
Le Jeu du Prince des sots et mère sotte.

THE river Indre crosses the south-east frontier of Touraine near Châtillon, and flows between Loches and Beaulieu till it reaches Corméry, where it turns sharply to the west, and passing the keep of Montbazon, winds slowly round the turrets of Azay-le-Rideau towards its meeting with the Loire below Langeais. Perhaps no greater contrast between two such buildings exists as between the two guardians of the Indre, the sculptured bridges of Azay-le-Rideau and the massive walls of Loches. Placed in a most important strategical position between the valleys of the Cher and the Vienne, Loches is itself guarded by Montbazon and Mont-

richard, and forms the lowest point of the line of fortresses that protect the southern approaches of the Loire.

One of the chief features in the flat landscape through which the railway from Tours passes is this keep of Montbazon, a vast square mass of masonry rising suddenly from the ground, the donjon of the ruined castle of Foulques Nerra. Poised upon one corner stands a colossal statue of the Virgin, evidently of recent erection, with much better effect than at first sounds possible; distance perhaps lent something of majesty, as it stood high above the fields and trees looking down upon the sunlit plain. The country past Reignac and Chambourg stretches in an endless flat expanse of land cultivated over every inch with that care of which French peasants seem alone to have the secret, and watered by the "ribbon of the Indre."

Above this plain rises the hill crowned with the towers of Loches,[1] like Mont St. Michel above the sands of the north coast. The houses, thrown together along steep and twisted streets, cluster beneath the walls that guard the castle, and the eye rises from the Tour de St. Antoine in the little

[1] The name seems to be derived from the word *loc* or *luc*, the same as loch = lake. Possibly the Indre used to overflow in earlier days.

"place" beneath, towards the donjon keep and the pinnacles of the Collegiate Church. A sharp ascent from this first tower, which is of sixteenth-century work, and used to contain the bells of the town, leads upward past the tiny Hôtel de Ville to the first line of walls. There is a plan drawn in 1699 showing the first extent and strength of these fortifications, which circled the whole area of the scattered buildings of the castle, and isolated it like an island from the surrounding country.

The buildings have three distinct divisions: the Collegiate Church in the midst, with the donjon and the prisons to the east, and on the other side the actual château, which is in part still inhabited, looking down upon the western plain. And if the dungeons will leave the most lasting impression on the traveller, it is this church which is the great architectural feature of the place. "In France," says Viollet le Duc, "exactly on the border line which separates buildings with cupolas from those with none, there is a strange and unique monument in which the influences of Oriental art are blended with the methods of construction adopted in the north at the beginning of the twelfth century. This is the Collegiate Church of Loches: a monument unique in the world, perfect in its kind, and of a savage beauty." It was round the first build-

ing raised on this spot that the castle and town of Loches began: here, in 450, St. Eustache built a church, which was dedicated by Childebert to La Madeleine. On the ruins of this early structure was built the Eglise Collégiale by Geoffrey Greygown in 962, and consecrated by Hardouin, Bishop of Tours, under the patronage of King Clothaire. In 1180 began the church as it now stands, all broken into points and angles, with not so much as the line of the roof horizontal.[1] I will not trust myself to attempt the architectural description of this extraordinary building. "It consists," says Mr. Petit,[2] "of two steeples of nearly the same height though different detail, flanked one of them by an apsidal projection, the other by a low rectangular porch, while the intermediate space is occupied by two large octagonal pyramids of stone, nearly in contact with each other as well as with the belfry towers. How are these pyramids supported? What we have taken for the front is the side; the flanking towers are in reality a central and western tower; the two pyramids of stone form the roof of the nave, and not only externally but internally also"—hollow pyramids whose tops

[1] There is hardly any wood in the construction at all—white stone is used throughout.

[2] *Architectural Studies in France,* new edition, revised by Edward Bell.

are lost in shadow, and give an indefinable feeling of terror. The gray weather-beaten stones upon its outer walls give a striking contrast to the cool white masonry within, very much like the effect of a glimpse of the interior of the cathedral at Christ Church from the Quad, without the richness of detail and carving in the later work, and with an added beauty all its own.

Through a very fine Romanesque porch, whose grotesque carvings seem designed to enforce the saying, "laid comme le péché mortel," and in which is a strange old cylindrical vessel, now used for holy water, we passed into this cold and quiet building, where some lines of the old tinted decorations were still left upon the stones, and the rich light from the windows above the altar at the farther end fell softly on the arches of the choir. The construction of the masonry is particularly noteworthy, and especially the corbelling of the roof of the nave, which is divided into two square compartments by a pointed arch of one square order. The aisles are quite independent of the main building. The pictures and trifles added by a later day had done less to spoil this church than in almost any other building of the same size we had seen. There was, it is true, one small chapel filled with such incongruities, but it was out of

sight; and the whole effect was pleasing in the extreme—the peculiarity of the building, its two white funnel-like domes opening upward to the roof, giving it an originality and charm which nothing could quite efface.[1]

A smiling verger, who refused to take our timorous denials, candle in hand led us down some steps to the right of the choir, and showed with quiet pride a subterranean chapel connected by a passage, long since blocked, with the castle. This is the crypt, situated under the south apse, which is small, but seems original. Here Louis XI., so it is said, came to pray, below ground and secret even in his devotions, in this castle so full of subterranean mysteries. Some strange paintings of saints and their accessories have also been discovered here beneath the plaster. The most beautiful ornament of the church in earlier times was the tomb of Agnes Sorel, which has been moved to the Tour d'Agnès, whither we next turned.

There is a door straight on past the church which is opened by a smiling old woman and discloses the Castle of Loches. We had come pre-

[1] Mr. Petit says that this church is later than the earliest specimens of the Perigueux dome and earlier than the Angevin vaultings, and therefore may be a link between the two; the leaving of the roofing open makes this an exceptional and distinct case.

pared for horrors, forgetting that the older portion of the château, that lay behind us to the east, was the place of the dungeons; and we were surprised. Everything wore an astonishingly humane aspect. This was partly accounted for by the fact that the Sous-Préfet of the district lives here, which gives the place a strange feeling of life and habitation; and we fortunately did not see M. le Sous-Préfet to dispel the illusion of antiquity by his modernised appearance—in anything but chain mail and wearing a formidable sword, he would have been disappointing.

Further impressions became still more peaceful. We were first led to the little quiet chapel, lighted by two windows of stained glass, where repose the remains of Agnes Sorel, "une douce et simple colombe plus blanche que les cygnes, plus vermeille que la flamme," as the inscription tells us. She lies draped in a dress whose folds have a singular charm of outline, with her feet resting upon two lambs that innocently suggest her name. The face is beautiful still, even in the marble restored with plaster as it is now, and I could believe that truly in life "son visage avait l'éclat des fleurs en printemps." Peace to her ashes—after so many violating hands have touched them. Even the revolutionists could not completely desecrate the

tomb they tried to rifle. Whatever else she may have been, we may remember that "Demoiselle de Seurelle, Dame de Beauté," placed her influence with Charles VII. on the side of good and, when need was, on the side of patriotism. The verses of Francis I. have a truer ring than the prudery of later days—

> "Gentille Agnès, plus d'honneur tu mérites
> (La cause étant de France recouvrir)
> Que ce que peut dedans un cloître ouvrir
> Close nonnain ou bien dévot hermite."

Marie d'Anjou, the gentle and kind Queen of Charles VII., always recognised the good qualities of Agnes; and even the Dauphin, whose spiteful malice against her frequently broke out, when he was King refused to let her tomb be moved from the church, "unless her bequests were taken from it too." So for a time her body stayed there. Her executor in the many pious bequests of her will was the famous Jacques Cœur, who had not yet fallen into unmerited disgrace. One tangible witness of the results she had no slight hand in bringing about is the "cul de lampe" on the tower at the west angle of the palace—a carved soldier, on the point of being beaten, thrusting through, in his last effort, the English leopard.

The Château of Loches

"Douce dans ses discours, apaisant les querelles," Agnes made far better use of her opportunities than many others, who have only succeeded in adding to a position equivocal at best a reputation decidedly unfortunate.[1]

The tower in which lies the tomb of Agnes Sorel was the tower in which she often lived, and, as might have been expected, it communicates with the apartments of the King. These present a fine façade of simple and strong architecture, faced by a terrace excellently restored, and looking down from a height that already seems astonishing upon the houses beneath, which have grown for ages round the immediate precincts of the castle, and within the shelter of its widespreading walls. The restoration of this part of the building was done with equal thoroughness and good taste.

Joined to the apartments of Charles VII. comes the façade of Louis XII., with a contrast just sufficient to denote the change of time from war to peace, from buttresses and meurtrières to carved wide windows, and not too striking to produce any discordant effect upon the building as a whole. It was in these buildings that Louis XII., after the death of Anne de Bretagne, lived so unwisely and

[1] See the account of Agnes Sorel's visit to Paris in 1448, in the *Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris.*

so well with the young and beautiful sister of the English King, whom he married in 1514. Being "fort antique et débile," as Louise de Savoie says bitterly in her Journal, he could not stand the strain of a complete change in his habits of life, and died soon afterwards. Here, too, in 1547, came his successor Francis on one of those feverish hunting excursions which immediately preceded his death.

We had but too short a time to pace the terrace and look down upon the view before the summons of our old lady and the impatient jingle of her keys called us away. Under the famous chestnut tree of Francis I., a tree that looks healthy enough to live as many years more as it has done already, and to grow still larger and more beautiful, we passed behind the main buildings to a little turret staircase, from which we were able to remark the beautiful details of the carving on the upper part of the house from the vantage-ground of a high window; I noticed the sitting hound which was one of the badges of Louis XII., and a strikingly powerful carving of a jester's head within its curling hood projecting from the line of stone beneath the roof. This same roof, too, presented a magnificent mass of oak beams and solid carpentry as we looked up at them from the floor of the top story which had

once been the Salle des Gardes, so we were informed, though why they were so far removed from practicable ground we could not at the time conjecture.

The staircase leads to the oratory of Anne de Bretagne, a tiny little chamber completely covered with carvings in the stone and plaster—the chief device was the ermine and the twisted cord repeated in endless variations, which were strangely picturesque at last.[1] Some traces of colour still cling to the walls, and a most delicate piece of stone carving hung from the keystone of the arch above us, like the tracery of lace upon a lady's handkerchief. We had entered through a door made in what was originally the altar of the little chapel, with a beautiful stone canopy above it, and went out through the old entrance into an apartment behind, which had apparently been used as a prison during the Revolution. Several of its inmates had left inscriptions, poetical and otherwise, upon the walls; one of these ended with the word

[1] The meaning of this symbol is much debated. The knotted cord untied again can hardly refer to the very brief space of Anne's widowhood having been spent here, nor is it a symbol peculiar to herself. She is said to have recommended it to many of the ladies about her Court, and possibly took it from her father, whose house was peculiarly devoted to St. Francis of Assisi.

"Esperance" in larger writing than the rest: a prisoner might, at all events, have more hope within these walls, swept by the winds of upper air, than in the ghastly dens below ground that we were soon to see.

In a corner of this same room were thrown two dusty and torn portraits of royal personages—"Presented by the Emperor" was written on their frames. They were but one more sign of the tempest of Republican sentiment which had left several marks on Loches from the first outburst of 1790 to the Republic of to-day. If there is one thing that Loches is not, it is not democratic; and we much admired the finesse with which the Republican official was ensconced in the most habitable portion of the castle, while the more dreary and appalling ruins were left to inspire a becoming horror of even the relics of criminal and despotic monarchy.

We had left the oldest part of Loches to the last. M. Mabille thinks that perhaps the earliest château was one of the rare ones built by the Merovingians in the sixth century, but though such an one may have existed, no older building than the gigantic donjon keep of Foulques Nerra is now to be seen in this part of the castle. It is like that of Rochester, but the flat pilaster buttresses often seen in

Norman work [1] have in this example massive shafts engaged one in each, forming a semi-cylinder. The stone for the building was taken from the great trench still to be seen between the castle and the hill of Vignemont. The Black Falcon, who had built Montbazon and Montrichard to protect this, the most important fortress, from attacks from Blois and Chaumont, could also overawe the neighbouring settlement at Beaulieu, where he built the abbey,[2] and whose inhabitants were frequently quarrelling with the men of Loches concerning certain market privileges and other questions, which seem to be equally unsettled at the present day. We looked up from beneath at the four great walls or rather cliffs of stone which formed the keep, where traces of four stories still were visible, reached by stairs cut in the thickness of the wall, and capable of containing 1200 men. The question of "supplies" was settled by a dark and extremely unwholesome-looking hole sinking into the bowels of the earth, through which the food for the garrison was raised. The whole had

[1] Petit, *op. cit.*

[2] According to the hideous fashion of desecrating tombs to sift the ashes of their dead for relics, and provide mouldering problems for archæological disputes, the coffin of Foulques Nerra has been broken open to see that he was really buried in Beaulieu. Even Agnes Sorel could not rest undisturbed by the unholy curiosity of "explorers."

evidently been built more with a view to durability and strength of resistance than elegance or grace; a relic of the older days which was almost deserted by the time Francis I. had metamorphosed the feudal castles of Touraine into so many royal hunting-seats.

But the strength of Loches had its advantages in its own time. It was as useful to the English Plantagenets as it had been to their Angevin forefathers. The first siege that Cœur-de-Lion undertook on his return from imprisonment was this of Loches, held by Guy de Laval for the French King. Philip lost it for a time, but took it from John Lackland, who was not strong enough to protect the forces of the widowed Berengaria. Passing for a while from the Crown as a reward to the Constable of France, Loches was reclaimed as a royal residence by St. Louis in a special letter from "Egypt on the banks of the Nile." John the Good came here on his way to defeat and captivity at Poitiers, and the next French King who dwelt at Loches was only "Roi de Bourges." Charles VII. and his Queen Marie d'Anjou possessed but the shadow of a kingdom before Agnes Sorel ended the work that Jeanne d'Arc had begun.

But the presiding spirit of the memories of Loches is Louis XI. Already as Dauphin he had

troubled the place with the intrigues of the Praguerie. Here the Bastard of Bourbon, Antoine de Chabannes,[1] and other captains "avec foison de gens d'armes," came to meet him and arrange for the conspiracy at Moulins. He had been at Loches under governors since about 1438, and chafed there after having tasted the sweets of command in Poitou and Dauphiné, where he had been sent to chase out the "écorcheurs."[2] The flatteries of his servants, and the suggestions of universal discontent made by his courtiers, gave fuel to the fire of ambition that burnt within him. The King crushed the conspiracy and tried to give the restless Dauphin occupation in conquering the rebellious Count of Armagnac and in some very savage fighting against the Swiss. Louis' wife, Margaret of Scotland, who had sailed to her wedding at Tours pursued by English ships, died at twenty-two about this time, and certain dark suspicions clung to the Dauphin's reputation from which he never shook himself free all his life. His other characteristics soon began to show them-

[1] Monstrelet, *Chroniques,* liv. ii. cap. ccxlv.

[2] For the terrible state of France in 1439, during the murders and depredations of these écorcheurs, see Olivier de la Marche, *Chroniques,* I. ccxliii. "Tout le tournoiement du royaume de France était plein de places et de forteresses, vivant de rapines et de proie."

selves too. In constant and open opposition to his father, he was at one time obliged to fly to Burgundy, and actually writes in excuse, "pour ce que, comme vous sçavez, mon bel oncle de Bourgogne a intention de brief aller sur le Turc, à la défense de la foi catholique."

It was while he was listening to the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* at his distant Court at Genep, that he heard tidings of his father's death, and at last seized the power he had been thirsting for so long. His first business was to revenge himself upon his father's friends, his next to raise extraordinary sums in pitiless taxation. One mistaken bargain at this time proved an exception to his usual rule of cunning and intrigue. After he had moved from Amboise to Tours he was there cajoled by the Pope into abolishing the Pragmatic Sanction, and seems to have got nothing in return but a holy sword.

But in spite of the dark shadow which this monarch had managed to cast over all Touraine during the process of encouraging its wealth and commerce, we cannot fail to be impressed with the strong sense of a vigorous personality; of a man who, with all his faults, resolved to rule, who if he could not be loved determined to be feared. Scott's masterly presentment of Louis XI. in *Quen-*

tin Durward will be in the mind of all travellers in Touraine, and Chateaubriand has thrown into strong relief the strange contrasts visible in this unique character, who was as immoral in his private life as he was tyrannically severe in public judgments.[1]

This Louis, who made his servants heralds, and his barbers Ministers of State, whose only confidants, says Voltaire, were low-born men with hearts lower than their stations, who regained by unscrupulous cunning what he lost by the natural depravity of his character, who showed conspicuous address and bravery when a youth of twenty, died at last a cowardly old man amidst despicable scenes of senile debauchery and terror. He died after having made justice secure and strengthened France by politics and war; and yet before his death he had killed by fair means or foul more than four thousand of his subjects, and, as in the case of the family of Nemours, shown the last degree of cold and calculating cruelty—a cruelty which left but few great men worth the name in France, and

[1] It is a curious fact for students of heredity that the daughter of Marguerite de Sassenaye, the mistress of Louis, married Aymar de Poitiers, an ancestor of the fair Diana whom we shall meet at Chenonceaux. It is strange, too, that this same Diana's husband was Louis de Brézé, Grand Seneschal of Normandy, whose father had married the daughter of Charles VII. and Agnes Sorel.

ground down the nation to the tranquillity of a gang of galley slaves: in all this his only limitation was betrayed in his manners, his will never wavered, for (until his death) he was at any rate no coward. "I can easily dare," says Commines, "to give this praise to Louis—never have I seen a man bear up so stoutly in adversity." [1] But the contrasts go still farther. The King who chained up the volumes of the Nominalists protected the first printers from Germany, and the freedom of the printing press received its first real encouragement in France from the most tyrannical monarch on the French throne.

One distinct aim can be seen throughout the changing actions of Louis' reign: his object was not so much to extend the outward boundaries of his kingdom as to crush the hostile feudality within, and to create absolute monarchy. "The Genoese have given themselves up to me," he writes, "and I hand them over to the devil." That Louis' foreign policy was not really so restricted in its aims as used commonly to be thought, is becoming more and more clear, but it is by the principle of centralisation that all his actions, good or bad,

[1] For a longer description of Louis' character see Commines, I. x., in which the significant words occur, "il était naturellement ami des gens de moyen état, et ennemi de tous grands qui se pouvaient passer de lui."

were dominated, and for this necessary task he was the necessary man.

In his enlightenment and his superstition, his cruelty and his great plans for France, Louis is a true type of his age, which was that of transition from dying mediævalism to the new life which the art of the Renaissance was bringing. It had been long in coming to France. One hundred and fifty years before, Dante and Petrarch had begun modern literature, but in France the horrors of the long war with England, of the plague, of the Jacquerie, above all of the civil war, had brutalised men. The ghastly idea of possession by the devil had taken hold of men's minds, and religion became a mockery in the face of the orgies of the Papacy of Avignon or of the monks nearer home.

Born in a time wherein nothing was finished and everything had begun, Louis partook of the monstrous nature of his unformed age, an age in which the 300 registers of the "Trésor des Chartes" paint manners as Villon, Basselin, or Regnier paint them, without shame and without restraint. They show us the bourgeoisie "sans chemise, sans pudeur, et par le dos," as Michelet says, who has so clearly painted the horrors of this age of "lead and iron," from 1300 to 1500.

The policy of centralisation which one day

should be the salvation of France was temporarily its ruin; men were reduced to one dull, dead level, the springs of morality were choked, energy was crushed, and when the King wished to rule he found his kingdom little better than an empty void. Thus is it that great discoveries and new inventions, material aid or chance assistance, all do nothing. Yet Joan of Arc had not died or the great chancellor Gerson preached in vain. National life was becoming conscious and active, and under the dead level of administrative uniformity made by Louis, was developing that vigour of intellectual and commercial life which two centuries of misrule from Valois and Bourbon could scarcely crush.

Loches

CHAPTER VIII

LOCHES (*Continued*)

Sous peu nous détruirons ces hautes
Murailles, briserons ces chaines, et
ferons disparaître ces tortures inventées
par les Rois—trop faibles pour
arréter un peuple qui veut sa
1785 liberté 1785.
The last Inscription in the prisons of Loches.[1]

THE great keep built by the Black Count was first used as a prison by that Fulk Rechin whose cruelty had shown itself at Chinon by the lifelong imprisonment of his brother. Passing from these enormous ruins the traveller is led through the chamber where the archers of the Scottish Guard reposed, and is shown what purported to be their ancient beds, structures in solidly-hewn wood, much resembling the accommodation given nowadays to a pack of staghounds. The work known as

[1] The greater number of the inscriptions mentioned in this chapter are quoted from the careful copies made by Mrs. Watts Jones, and published by her as "Thoughts in Prison" in the *English Illustrated Magazine* for February 1891.

"la Tour Neuve," at the north-west angle of the fortress, was built by Louis XI. less for the sake of increasing the strength of the fortifications than for the security of prisoners. Within a lower room is the torture chamber, with a suggestive-looking iron bar, whose uses the guide will describe with much feeling and expression. We found the place now served as a prison for the Government, but it was empty at the time. Criminals may have been scared at the prospect of a lengthy sojourn in a chamber full of such hideous associations.

"Entrez Messieurs," says an ironical inscription scratched upon the prison walls, "Entrez Messieurs ches le Roy nostre maistre." A cruel King and a hard-hearted when crossed in his desires was the master of Jean Balue, whose cell is in the inner prisons on the second story from the bottom. From the doorway, opening half-way up the wall, we can stand where Louis XI. and his "compère Tristan l'Hermite" stood to watch their wretched prisoner in his cage of iron, whose staples are still fixed into the roof above. It seems almost incredible that western civilisation should have produced a parallel to the hideous sufferings of the caged-in Bajazet at the hands of Tamburlaine; but if the witness of Commines were not enough, there is distinct men-

tion of the making of this very cage in the accounts of Louis XI.[1]

Jean Balue, who from the post of secretary to the King had risen by unscrupulous dishonesty and the omnivorous activity of a reckless parvenu, to the dignity of Bishop of Angers and Cardinal, had rapidly got into the good graces of his master, who seldom asked questions when the ends he wished were attained. At last the schemer overreached himself. After having been responsible for much that happened at Peronne, and gone farther than his powers justified in meddling with the politics of Burgundy, he found it advisable for his own ends, after Louis' return, to sow discord afresh among the royal princes and write treasonable proposals to the Duke of Burgundy.[2] He was imprisoned at Loches, Montbazon, Plessis-lez-Tours, and other places for some eleven years, and died after his release still plotting (with Cardinal de la Rovere) at Ancona.

Another inscription, carved with great care and

[1] "À Guion de Bue . . . la somme de 60 livres turnois, pour icelle estre par lui employée à faire faire une cage de fer, pour la surreté et garde de la personne du Cardinal d'Angiers."

[2] Jean de Troyes (*Livre des faits advenus au temps du roi Louis XI.*), ". . . et autres grandes et merveilleuses diableries qu'il écrivait audit duc de Bourgogne par un sien serviteur, qui de ces dites lettres et instructions qu'il portait fut trouvé saisi." . . .

delicacy in the hard stone, is attributed to a worthier prisoner. The words "Dixisse me aliquando penituit, tacuisse nunquam" may well have been actually traced by the historian-philosopher Commines, who was not only imprisoned but confined in a cage as well. He has described these cages as made "of iron and some of wood, covered with iron plates without and within, 'avec terribles ferrures,' some eight feet broad and about the height of a man. . . . Plusieurs l'ont maudit, et moi aussi qui en ai tâté, sous le roi de présent (Charles VIII.) l'espace de huit mois." He had been implicated in the conspiracy of Orleans in Brittany and elsewhere against the Regent Anne de Beaujeu, of which we have heard already; and it is strange to think of him sitting within these darkened walls and choosing the phrases for his Chronicles of Louis XI. that were to form the first part of his famous history.

Memories of even more stirring deeds, beneath a brighter sky, were to come to another famous prisoner later on, in whose ears Dante's words were ringing—

"Nessun maggior dolore
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
Nella miseria."

The inscription that translates this is attributed to Ludovico Sforza, whose dungeon is at the end of

interminable passages and dank labyrinths of rock within the foundations of a third tower across the courtyard begun by Louis XI., of which only the Salle des Gardes of Louis XII. now remains above ground.

Our descent "in infernos" now began. Within a little doorway the woman who guided us was striving to light a small and sputtering lamp that seemed to resent being compelled to show off these subterranean mysteries. A narrow twisting staircase leads down to the level of the moat outside barred with great doors at every turn.

A hundred steps below ground is the cell of Ludovico Sforza, called Il Moro, Duke of Milan. On the wall opposite the window, which gathers through a slit in fourteen feet of rock what little light has strayed into the shadowy passages from the sunny fields of Touraine above, is a small square scratched on the stone to mark the only spot touched by the daylight. The room is also strangely decorated with rough attempts at fresco, with which the prisoner amused himself, red stars in patterns on the wall, and, twice repeated, a prodigious helmet with its casque just showing a stern, hard-looking face inside.[1]

[1] The face upon the walls of Loches is not unlike the features of Il Moro in Paulus Jovius, if we take into considera-

These were but poor substitutes for the fresh frescoes of Leonardo in the beautiful Milan that Sforza was trying to forget, a Milan untouched by time and still enriched with statues that are lost to us, with carving still clear and delicate upon its palaces that echoed with the songs of singers from beyond the Alps.

Banished in 1476 by Cecco Simonetta, the Secretary of Galeazzo Maria, Ludovico came back to the imprudent widow Bonne de Savoie, and was accompanied in the darkness of the night by a certain Captain Roberti di Sanseverino. By the next year Cecco was beheaded, as he had prophesied, and Il Moro's little nephews were safely gratifying their tastes for military architecture within the strong walls of the Rocca.

For some time the Regent lived in happiness and great splendour, encouraging the lectures upon science and the classics that learned Greeks or Orientals were giving in Milan; watching, too, the gallantry and love-making that flourished among his courtiers under his princely rule. And it was

tion the difference in training and circumstances of their artists. A much exaggerated account of Ludovico's hardships is given by Jovius, and the interesting fact mentioned of a certain faithful "Pontremulo" having accompanied Sforza in his captivity. There is a portrait of Ludovico in the library of Christ Church, Oxford.

from women that his first troubles came. At last he had been obliged to marry his long-imprisoned nephew to Isabel of Arragon—he had himself wedded another princess of Arragon, Beatrice d'Este, the daughter of the Duke of Ferrara, and the women soon began to quarrel. The young Duchess summoned the help of Naples against Ludovico, who then armed himself with letters from the Emperor, and called in Charles VIII. of France, as we have heard before. The opportune death of the young duke left Il Moro with only the infant heir to crush, and his ambitious schemes were prospering, crossed only by the first phenomenal successes of the young French King; but these were soon counterbalanced by the mistakes of Orleans, whose claim to Milan—a fountain of wealth to its possessor in the midst of its rich plain—grew weaker and weaker before the bold policy of Ludovico; for while the widowed Duchess Mabel could get no help from any Court in Italy or out of it, Beatrice d'Este was entertaining the Emperor Maximilian, at the cost of terrible taxation to the Milanese and of her own life to her husband. Her tomb is in the Certosa near Pavia, and close by it is the man who worked through good and evil for her sake, Il Moro, "with the fat face and fine chin of the elderly Napoleon, the beak-

like nose of Wellington, a small, querulous, neat-lipped mouth, and immense eyebrows stretched like the talons of an eagle across the low forehead." [1]

But in 1499 the claims of Orleans had become the claims of France. The quarrel for the succession of Milan had become a question of European politics. Louis had conquered Lombardy, and secured new letters from the Emperor to annul Il Moro's claim; and Ludovico himself, "with two small children and some two thousand horse," escaped to Coni, a town upon the route to Germany, exclaiming against the treachery of Venice, yet not strong enough to come to blows with France, "comme tourmenté de peine mentale, à voix désolée et regard éploré," as Jean d'Auton tells us. But he had by no means despaired. Sheltered by the King of France's enemy, the Emperor Maximilian of Austria, and provided with "force ducats, qui est une très bonne provision," says Saint Gelais, he managed by the next year to get together sufficient forces of Swiss and others to make another bid for Milan "un morceau si friand et de si bonne digestion." He was helped, too, by the misgovernment of Trivulzio, whom King Louis had left in power, and by the readiness of Milan

[1] Mary Darmesteter, *End of the Middle Ages*, p. 307.

and the Lombards to revolt, who were "swollen with poison," says the French chronicler, using a metaphor that seems an easy one to writers upon Italy, "and like vipers, ready to secretly shoot forth the venom of their treason." Ludovico Sforza himself, in the age of the Borgias, had not shed so much blood as many of his contemporaries, nay, he had been the patron of literature and art in Milan, yet the fickle Italians had at first welcomed Louis XII.'s army; the change had only come when the alliance with Cæsar Borgia had appeared in all its horror. At this juncture Ludovico returned with an army behind him, swept back Trivulzio from Milan, and took the famous Bayard prisoner. "The Loyal Servitor" tells the story, which does nothing but credit to Il Moro.[1]

Bayard, being in garrison about twenty miles from Milan, heard that there were some three hundred Italian heads to be broken in Binasco. Now the captain of that place, Messire Jean Bernardin Cazache, being a good knight and well trained in war, did not wait to be taken like a bird upon its nest, but sallied forth valiantly against the small handful of French knights. With loud cries of "France, France! More, More!" the troops met,

[1] See "Le loyal Serviteur," *Chronique du bon Chevalier*, Michaud et Poujoulat, 1re Série, t. iv.

and the Italians were soon flying towards Milan with Bayard hard upon their tracks. So heartily did the good Chevalier pursue his enemies that, paying no heed to the turning back of his companions, he rushed through the gates of Milan with Cazache's men, and was therein taken and brought before Ludovico, who wondered to see him so young, and asked the business that brought him, in such hurried fashion, to Milan. Bayard, "qui ne fut de rien ébahi," answered courteously and well; and in a short time upon his own good horse again, and clad in the armour he had worn in the pursuit, he was riding out of Milan with a herald and telling the Seigneur de Ligny in the French camp of the courtesy and courage of Il Moro, "qui pour peu de chose n'est pas aisé à étonner."

As we have seen before, Novara stood or fell with Milan, and to the strengthening of Novara Ludovico now turned. Soon after Bayard's adventure La Trémouille and Georges d'Amboise had brought a large body of Swiss and French to the help of Trivulzio at Mortara, and the whole were soon blockading Sforza in the same town in which he had besieged the Duke of Orleans years before.[1]

[1] There is a translation of Commines (who is the authority for operations in Italy previous to the taking of Ludovico)

Ludovico's mercenaries failed him at the crisis, and betrayed him to the French,[1] who put him for safety into the castle of Novara.[2] The King was at Lyons when the news reached him, and Saint Gelais reports the joy with which he announced the taking of Sforza to Anne de Bretagne, comparing La Trémouille to Scipio, Clovis, Charles Martel, and many other military heroes who had deserved well of their country.

The Comte de Ligny himself had recognised the importance of his capture at the moment, and Louis XII. determined to make sure that Ludovico should trouble Italian politics no more. After so many changes came the last scene of all, the beginning of the end. "An old French street surging with an eager mob, through which there jostles a long line of guards and archers; in their midst a tall man, dressed in black camlet, seated on a mule.

made by Thomas Danett in 1596, in which Trivulzio is called "Mr. John James of Trevol." The whole book is almost as good a piece of work as Florio's *Montaigne*, and well worth reading.

[1] He was trying to get away with "ses cheveux troussés sous une coiffe, une gorgerette autour du col, un pourpoint de satin cramoisi, et des chausses d'écarlate, la hallebarde au poing; et en ce point le prit le Comte de Ligny."—*Jean d'Auton.*

[2] There were Swiss on both sides, but the French recruiting had been done under the authority of the Cantonal administration, and Sforza's Swiss were afraid to oppose them.

In his hands he holds his biretta and lifts up unshaded his pale courageous face, showing in all his bearing a great contempt of death. It is Ludovico, Duke of Milan, riding to his cage at Loches." Abbés and scribes of later days who never fought or loved a single hour as Sforza did through all his throbbing, reckless life, have pointed out what consolation it must have afforded to the prisoner to have thus covered his walls with decoration, by the help of necessary ladders too, and even paint-brushes, unwonted solace of a captive's weariness; they forget the inscriptions that run round the walls as well, they forget how bitterly Ludovico found that

> "This is truth the poet sings,
> That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things."

Here for nearly nine years Sforza languished, trying to forget, until he was moved higher up the tower and even allowed some exercise in open air before his death.[1]

Farther along the same dark passage which opens into Sforza's cell, and deeper still within the earth, is what is known as the Prison of the Bishops. As Il Moro had scratched his spot of

[1] The inscriptions Sforza left tell their own pitiful tale of the strong man, who would have welcomed sudden death in

sun, so these ecclesiastics had made a pitiful representation of an altar and a cross; and on the wall beneath the window are the marks still left where each in turn gripped the hard stones with his feet and climbed up painfully to see what little light by some mistake had been allowed to shine upon them. Few things in all this miserable mass of terrible recollections seemed to give me so keen a picture of the sufferings endured by men thus shut out from the common air and light of day, as these few poor footsteps so wearily worn out in the hard rock. These prisoners were the Bishops of Puy and Autun,[1] who were implicated in the

fair fight, slowly decaying in this living tomb, where "death assailed him but he could not die."

> "Quant mort me assault et que je ne puis mourir
> Et secourir on ne me veult mais me faire rudesse
> Et de liesse me voir bannir."

And again in large letters among the rough red frescoes—"Je porte en prison pour ma device que je m'arme de patience par force de peine l'on me fait pouster" (*sic*).

"Ludovico Sforza was called Il Moro," says Jovius, "because he bore a mulberry tree for his device, which from the seasons of its flowers and fruit was taken as an emblem of prudence." "God and Il Moro alone know" ran the proverb at the time. Some derive the name wrongly from his dark (Moorish) complexion.

[1] Such is the accepted tradition at the present day. These particular bishops were certainly imprisoned at Loches under the circumstances mentioned above.

In the *Mémoires* of Guillaume de Jaligny (secretary of Pierre de Beaujeu) we hear that in January 1487 the Bishops

conspiracy of the Constable Charles de Bourbon, just before the defeat of Francis I. at Pavia.

Bourbon, who at the time of his marriage was the most powerful prince in France, was relentlessly attacked after his wife's death by the wicked and avaricious Louise de Savoie. By the aid of her execrable tool, the Chancellor Du Prat, she finally drove him out of the kingdom, threw one of the French King's strongest nobles into the arms of the Emperor, and was responsible for a career of lawlessness and rapine which ended in the sack of Rome. But Bourbon, before he became merely a reckless adventurer, had aimed at forming for himself a kingdom of his vast possessions in the heart of France, backed by the forces of the Emperor, and with England in her old provinces to the south. It was in this part of the conspiracy that the bishops with whom we are concerned were implicated, and they certainly suffered to the full the penalty for their imprudence. Bourbon's secret negotiations with the Emperor had taken

of Périgueux, called De Pompadour, and of Montauban, called De Chaumont, were found in correspondence with Dunois and Orleans in the same plot in which Commines was implicated, and which led to the war in Brittany. "Pour ce sujet," says Jaligny, "le roi les fit un matin constituer prisonniers," and they were interrogated before the officers of the Archbishop of Tours. So this same cell may have acquired an "odour of sanctity" even before the conspiracy of Bourbon in 1523.

place in the spring of 1523, and though rumours of them had reached the Court, Francis had paid no attention to them, and was on his way to Lyons for the march that was to end in Pavia, when the Sieur de Brézé, Seneschal of Normandy, husband of the famous Diana, brought him accurate tidings of the conspiracy, which were obtained through the confession of two Norman gentlemen—De Brézé had no notion that he was implicating in this terrible charge his own wife's father, Jean de Poitiers, Seigneur de Saint Vallier. After this warning the King waited for further reinforcements at Moulins, and there met Bourbon, who pretended to be ill and would not see him, fearing that the evil influence of Louise de Savoie would overcome the natural generosity of Francis.

In a few days Bourbon escaped to his fortified castle of Chantelles, and from there sent the Bishop of Autun to the King asking for assurances of restitution to his lands and goods. But the King's deepest suspicions had been aroused by the flight, and the bishop was arrested on his way to Lyons, bearing the Constable's despatches, and with him Saint Vallier, Émard de Prie, La Vauguyon, and others of the duke's friends. Bourbon meanwhile went on, stopping for one night at Puy in Auvergne, probably with his friend the bishop,

and at length after several exciting escapes got safe to Italy.

Still deeper in the hideous recesses of the rock of Loches, in gloomy caverns where the light from our small lamp could barely penetrate to the fungus rotting on the slimy walls, is the den where Saint Vallier, the father of Diane de Poitiers, was shut up by Francis I. "Monsieur mon fils," he writes to his son the Seneschal, "le Roy m'a faict prendre sans nulle raison . . et m'a faict mener icy au chasteau de Loches comme un faulx traistre qui m'est si très horrible regret que je m'en meurs." And to Diana: "Madame—suis icy arrivé au chasteau de Loches aussy mal traicté que paouvre prisonnier pourroit estre . . . je vous requiers ayez tant de pityé de vostre paouvre père que de le vouloir venir veoir." [1] And Diana did her best, though at first with little success, for the King wrote hotly to his judges to press the trial, and to find out by any and every means, from Saint Vallier and the others, all the details of the conspiracy. "Il faut nécessairement et promptement sçavoir," he writes, "au besoin par torture qui sont les conspirateurs. . . . Saint Vallier et d'Escar savent tout." [2] Sentence of death was with difficulty re-

[1] MS. Fr., No. 5109, fos. 103, 104.
[2] MS. Fr., No. 5109, fo. 111.

mitted to imprisonment for life. "Entre quatre murailles de pierre maconnées dessus et dessous, es quelles n'y aura qu'une petite fenestre."[3] It is said that at last Diana's entreaties won her father's freedom from the King, and it adds another memory to these strange dungeons to think of Diana picking her way through the black passages towards the cell where her father lay waiting his deliverance, his hair turned white with the horror of thick darkness round him. Far longer is the tale of the prisoners of Loches—

> "Qui no sab de sospirar
> Vinga sen assi estar,
> Car no sol sospirara
> Mas de dolar gemira," [2]

wrote one of them in the cachot of the drawbridge, and I can imagine no place so full of terrible associations; but only a few of the most important have

[1] In 1525 the Constable Bourbon expressly stipulates, in his treaty with the King of Spain, for the deliverance of Saint Vallier, so he must have been in prison at least two years. For the conspiracy of Bourbon see Du Bellay, xvii. 266, etc.; Belleforest, ii. 1434, etc.

[2] Mrs. Watts Jones gives the following translation of the above—

> "He who sighs hath never known,
> Come within these walls of stone;
> Here not only shall he sigh,
> He shall groan in misery."

been spoken of here. Among later prisoners was Charles de Lorraine, Duc d'Elbœuf, a man of little merit, who fell with the rest of the house of Guise after the murders at Blois. De Retz has summed him up in a few bitter sentences as a man without heart and without intelligence—" c'était le galimatias du monde le plus fleuri "—who lost his nobility of character with his riches, and forfeited every claim to pity in misfortune.

More worthy of commiseration, if not more unhappy, was François de Rochechouart, nephew of the Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld, who was implicated in the various miserable Court intrigues of " Monsieur " in 1633. For two years he was kept in the walls of Loches by Richelieu, without any positive proof having been brought against him, and merely in the hope of extracting some confession from his misery. To the same end he was ordered for execution and reprieved at the last moment, but nothing would shake his determination to keep silence, and he finally left France for Italy until the King's death. No wonder that amid so many gruesome realities one fable has arisen that has even received the support of serious authorities. A certain Pontbrillant, Governor of Loches, had the unpleasant curiosity to investigate the inmost recesses of its prisons. Several iron

doors were broken down, and at last behind one of them was found the body of a man sitting with his head upon his hands, of great stature, and clothed like a knight of three centuries ago. The corpse fell into dust on contact with the outer air. Here is much matter for a tragedy. But what is known and certain is sadder than any imagination, and nothing in the castle leaves so deep an impression as the scratches and lines upon the walls with which the prisoners strove to lighten the weariness of their cells or to keep some thought of hope within their hearts. Here is one more of these inscriptions, with whose graceful sentiment we left behind us the blackened walls of Loches—

"Qui vaut mieux amour ou justice?
Et se tousiours amour estoit
Da point justice ne faudroit
Pour ce que amour est follie
Et loin justice establie, Responce
Amour vaut mieux."

Langeais

CHAPTER IX

LANGEAIS

" Anne, qui fut femme de deux grands rois;
En tout grande cent fois, comme reine deux fois.
Jamais reyne comme elle n'enrichit tant la France,
Voylà que c'est d'avoir une grande alliance."

BRANTÔME, *Anne de Bretagne.*

WE had already heard much of Anne de Bretagne in the course of our wanderings along the Loire, and after seeing her oratory at Loches it became impossible to put off any longer a visit to the hall where she was married in Langeais. The road from Tours to Langeais is a straight and good one, whether for riding or driving, and follows the right or north bank of the river past Luynes to Cinq Mars, where the railway crosses over too, and follows the road[1] into Langeais between the river and a hill upon its banks.

The village at first sight does not look attractive, but there is one good main street, from which numberless little alleys open out lined by tiny cottages, and ending in a strip of green or garden

[1] The high road from Paris to Angers.

ground. At the end of this street rise two vast round towers that from a distance look far too big for their surroundings, and it is not till the visitor is fairly in the little square beyond the house of Rabelais, and face to face with the main entrance, that he can realise the full proportions of the Château of Langeais.

Alingavia, says M. Mabille, was one of the oldest of the Roman settlements, and Roman remains are still traceable in the foundations of the old donjon keep, rebuilt in 1000. Gregory of Tours tells us, too, that St. Martin built a church here, and the present edifice contains some of the early work near the east end, which is triapsal;[1] some old shafts and arches are arranged on the south side so as to form a covered walk externally.[2]

But of the buildings within the castle walls, of which distinct traces are still left, the fort built by Foulques Nerra to blockade Eudes at Tours is the oldest. Little but the outer shell of its walls and a few traces of masonry about the windows remain, but from the little hill on which it stands can be obtained the finest view of the inner side of the château. "The interior court"—I quote from

[1] Henry Petit, *op. cit.*

[2] In 1118 the Fulk of Anjou who died upon the throne of Jerusalem in 1142, built a chapel at Langeais, and founded a collegiate church for his relics from Palestine.

The Entrance to Château of Langeais

Mrs. Mark Pattison [1]—" is almost wholly confined by the buildings around it; the high walls which defend it on the outside are cut up at well-guarded angles by massive towers, and pierced at irregular intervals by narrow openings. The whole length is crowned by heavy machicolated battlements, so that the aspect of the exterior is severe, but the façade which looks upon the court is not wanting in elegance. Four small towers, each of which contains a spiral staircase, break the monotony of the front and give access to the different stories. The interior space is divided out in the simplest fashion, and the arrangements adopted on the ground floor continue in unvarying repetition tier above tier. But above, along the roof, run no heavy battlements; a bold projecting cornice takes their place in surmounting the wall, and over this rises a sharply pointed roof, the outline of which is broken by towers and pierced by chimneys and dormers."

I have quoted thus far to make quite clear the exact position of Langeais in the architecture of Touraine. It is a fortress of the Middle Ages that is one of the finest existing examples of a French castle built about the middle of the fifteenth century, and bears upon its very walls the traces of coming change. The cornice, which at Langeais replaces

[1] *The Renaissance of Art in France*, vol. i. cap. 2.

the battlements on the walls of the inside only, is destined soon to replace them on the outside also. "At Chenonceaux, at Azay-le-Rideau, at Blois, at Chambord, its bold projecting lines encircle each building with a crown." We had seen the older forms of feudal architecture at Chinon and at Loches; Langeais seemed the connecting link between the older order and the new. The problem which its architect had to solve was to combine a stronghold capable of defence with a house calculated for the increasing necessities of daily life; the fortifications seem planned on a scale very much behind the science of the times, for gunpowder is left wholly out of the calculation, while every means for keeping out an escalade attack has been carefully made use of: the only gate that opens from without into the court is flanked, as at Chaumont, by two massive towers and guarded by a portcullis.

Of the first building on this site, after the Black Count's donjon had fallen into ruins, little save a few bricks remains to indicate that Romano-Gallic methods of construction still continued. A later château was begun by Pierre de la Brosse, the son of a good family in Touraine, who had seen some service in the Court of St. Louis, and reached the highest powers of a favourite under Philip III. Against all the enemies whom such a position

naturally aroused Pierre was able to make a good resistance until he imprudently attacked the reputation of the Queen, who joined the barons against him and finally hanged him at Vincennes in 1272, on charges which have remained unknown and were probably designedly obscured.

It is this same old château which was occupied by the English during their invasions while the Black Prince was making his campaign along the Loire; it was given up to Charles VII. only to be retaken, and at last the English were bought out of Langeais as they were out of Rochecorbon by the combined subsidies of the citizens of Touraine.

The Château of Langeais as it stands at present was built in 1464 under the direction of Jean Briçonnet, first mayor of Tours, by the care of Jean Bourrée, minister of Louis XI., and governor of Langeais, who was also the builder of Plessis-lez-Tours, a château which in its complete state was very like what Langeais has remained. The place is now in the possession of M. Siegfried, and, by his judicious and tasteful expenditure of large sums of money, is being gradually brought into one harmonious picture of oak carvings, tapestry, and warm tiled floors—the chimney and ceiling of the Salle des Gardes are especially beautiful; its walls are painted by Lameire with the arms of Anne de Bretagne,

whose cordelière reappears in many other details of the decoration.

Perhaps the strangest feature of the place is the quaint little passage beneath the roof, the guards' "chemin de ronde," formed by the machicolations, that extends all round the château, lighted by innumerable little windows which give an ever-changing view of the valley of the Loire from the forest of Chinon west and south, to the cathedral towers of Tours far off among the mist towards the east. But the most interesting room in Langeais is the great hall, where Anne de Bretagne was married to King Charles VIII. of France.

The story of the war in Brittany, and the revolt of Orleans against the Regent Anne de Beaujeu, has already introduced us to the little Breton duchess. Brantôme sketches her portrait in his Gallery of Illustrious Ladies. "Her figure," says he, "was small and delicate. It is true that one leg was shorter than the other, though by very little, and it was scarcely noticeable, for her beauty was no whit damaged by that, and many very beautiful women have I noticed with this same slight defect (*ceste legère défectuosité*), such as the Duchesse de Longueville. Besides, there would seem to be a great fascination about the walk of such women, owing to certain graces of movement which are not

commonly found in others." [1] Add to this a calm and dignified carriage, which revealed the firm will and resolution of character ripened at an early age by the troubles of the times. But if Anne had thus far gained from her Breton upbringing, she had all the Breton faults, the pride, the anger, and the self-will of that strong and narrowed nationality. If her wishes were clearly defined, her will imperious, her views were also somewhat limited: she lacked the supple nature of a truly great woman, because she was without that loftiness of mind and intellect which allows its possessor to appreciate while it criticises every form of life and manners with which it comes in contact. This is why we find her alternately the prey to pride, to anger, and to hate, to a tenacity of purpose through good and evil which degenerates into a wrong-headed sullenness. "Once she has bethought her of anything," says Contarini, the Venetian ambassador, "she must have her way, whether by smiles or tears." Similarly it is her love of vengeance, her unrelenting hatred, that her panegyrist Brantôme can alone find to blame, "si la vengeance est un sy, puisqu'elle est

[1] The firm chin and somewhat large nose of her face in later life are best seen in the medal struck in 1499, after her second marriage, which bears the legend "Lugdun . Republica . gaudente . Bis . Anna . regnante . benigne . sic . fui . conflata."

si belle et si douce." It was she who built the good ship *La Cordelière* which blew up in action with the English fleet off Saint Maché in August 1513.

A princess with so strongly marked a character was not one to let herself be married at the convenience of her subjects or of any man, and all Europe had been already somewhat amused at her capture of the unwilling Maximilian and her alliance with England and Spain. This could have but one result. Anne's new allies were by no means inclined to attach the importance to the Breton duchess which she desired, and France was only made the more attentive to the frontier and the incessant quarrels of the Breton lords. At last the politic and skilful Regent saw her opportunity. Making every use of the influence over Anne possessed by the young Duke of Orleans just released from prison, and tempting at the same time her ambition by the offer of a throne, the Regent arranged the marriage of her young brother Charles VIII. with the heiress of Brittany. The duchess had little scruple in giving up her tardy lover Maximilian, whose daughter had already been somewhat similarly abandoned by the King of France, and in December 1491 the marriage contract of Anne and Charles VIII. was drawn up in the great hall of the Château of Langeais, which assured

the union of France and Brittany, and gave the business-like little Breton the right of marrying the next King of France if she outlived her first husband.

At this time she was about seventeen years old. The firmness of her character was yet veiled by the modesty and grace of youth, and all her natural courage and loyalty was conspicuous.

Strictly honourable in her life as she was faithful to her religion, she at once took up the authority of her position and grasped the meaning of affairs around her. Contarini describes her husband at the same period as plain of visage, with great eyes that seemed to see but weakly, an aquiline nose too large for the face, and thick lips always open, slow of speech, and with certain nervous movements in his hands. Beside Charles VIII., among the courtiers in the great hall round her, stands Étienne de Vesc, the historian, talking of the manuscript of Livy, which he had asked La Trémouille to bring back for him from Brittany, and behind him is the Maréchal de Gié, looking somewhat distrustfully at the new Queen, with whom he is no great favourite, and whose bitter hatred he will afterwards incur.

Pierre de Rohan, Sire de Gié, of a Breton stock, had the blood of Du Guesclin in his veins, through his grandfather's marriage, and by his mother was a

descendant of the Viscontis. He was taken from Brittany, where his recollections were not of the most pleasant kind,[1] by the Admiral de Montauban, and by him placed in the Court of Louis XI., where he learned to be a good Frenchman even if he were a bad Breton. In six years he was a councillor and captain of the Château of Blois, and, later on, is sent with Commines to Amiens, where negotiations with England were in progress, to see that nothing contrary to agreement was attempted by the crowd of English soldiers who had come with their ambassador. But no especial watchfulness was necessary; the Englishmen were found to be all dead drunk. He was with Commines, too, when Louis was struck with apoplexy at Chinon, and his skill in diplomacy and Court affairs is evident from his success in the arrangements made for the government of the kingdom by Charles d'Amboise and the rest in that little room beneath the King's bed, while the terrible patient above was striving not to lose his authority with his failing strength. It is one more proof of his tact that, though a member of the Regent Anne de Beaujeu's council, he could yet remain a firm friend of Louis d'Orléans, calm down the revolts

[1] His mother had poisoned his father, her first husband, and died in the dungeon where her second husband cautiously put her.

in Brittany, and finally be one of the chief negotiators in the marriage of the Duchess Anne.

De Gié was uneasy, and with reason, at the conversation of the Court. The King, who had grown up neglected at Amboise with nothing to occupy his thoughts but the romances of chivalry which Charlotte de Savoie read him, had only been preserved from hazarding his forces sooner by the interruptions of the war in Brittany. But now great movements seemed to be in the air. In the year after his marriage Spain had chased the Moors from Granada, and America was discovered by Columbus. The full effects of the policy of Louis XI. became evident not only in the pursuance of his Italian schemes, but in the strength and consolidation of the royal power which made such attempts possible at all.

The invasion of Italy had been a constant dream among Frenchmen, and now, amid the confusion of Europe, France saw her opportunity. The Mussulman raids from the East had terribly exhausted life and property in Italy; Venice and Naples had even been so mad as to use these dangerous neighbours against each other, and make a Turkish invasion possible. There was danger, too, from the West. Since 1480 Torquemada had made all Spain like one vast furnace of human flesh, and had turned out

the Jews to wander over Europe leaving plague and famine in their tracks; twenty thousand famishing spectres died before the walls of Genoa. Italy herself was filled with prodigies and warnings; men like Machiavelli, in despair of Divine help, had taken Policy for their god, others were listening to the warnings of Savonarola, or watching the pictures full of the sombre teaching of the grief of Michael Angelo.

In the midst of all this the ambition of the young French King, which had been smouldering since the Venetian embassy in 1484, was fanned into quick flame by the messages of Ludovico Sforza—France should step in to this distracted Italy, France who alone could understand the message which Italy had to give, who was to make a discovery more powerful in its results than that of Spain beyond the ocean, and to set in motion the two great electric currents; one, called the Renaissance, setting away from Christianity, the other, called the Reformation, trying to get nearer to it; the school of Rabelais and Voltaire on the one side, the Puritanism of Luther and of Calvin on the other.

Commines tells the whole story of this ill-advised invasion of Italy " without generals, without money, with the impromptu army of a moment's whim." Let us look closer at this strange company that is

crossing the passes of the Alps. It is evening, and through the smoky glare of the torches appear the tall halberds of the first division above their waving plumes, a barbarian division of Swiss and German freebooters, tall ruffians in many-coloured tunics short-waisted, with tightly-fitting leggins, and cuirasses only in the front rank; behind them comes the short quick step of the small sunburnt Gascons, some six thousand of them, quick and hot fighters, and the best marching men in Europe; close on their heels are the cavalry in full armour, each horseman accompanied by his page and servants and riding a monstrous charger without tail or ears; these are followed by the light cavalry armed with bows, and by the Scottish guard,[1] behind whom rides the King surrounded by three hundred archers and two hundred picked horsemen clad in gold and scarlet; in the rear are the lumbering uncouth machines that served as cannon; and thus they march on towards the unknown country, which will receive

[1] The Scotch bodyguard at the French Court, says Fleuranges in 1507, wore white jerkins covered with gold embroidery, with a crown on their breasts. In *Some Account of the Stuarts of Aubigny,* Lady Elizabeth Cust has added an important chapter to the interesting story of the Scots in France who had become connected with the most influential families in Europe; both Esmé Stuart, for instance, and his wife, Katherine de Balsac, could trace relationship with the Viscontis of Milan.

them, much to their surprise, as something superhuman and Divine, and suffer itself to be swiftly conquered; too swiftly to be safely done: but the Alps might now be sunk into the sea—the boast of Cicero was true again though with a changed meaning; the mountain passes had been often crossed before, but never had so much been carried home again by the returning soldiers.

It was a distracted country this Italy through which the stampede of the young French King's army rushed almost unhindered, a country where Leonardo's frescoes and Bellini's Madonnas looked down upon crimes equal to those of the Medicis and the Borgias; where the burning words of Savonarola taught the people submission to the scourge of God; where Capponi roused the burghers to enthusiasm for their new French patron, and opposition to young Piero de Medicis, the mortal enemy of France. But Piero had made no plans for defence and no schemes for alliance, and found himself at last obliged to leave his Florentine palace and his young son Lorenzo (the father of Catherine de Medicis) and meet the French King in his camp. There was a great contrast in the two men: the handsome, graceful Italian, arrogant and proud as he was cruel, and the small, high-shouldered Frenchman looking sickly and but half grown up,

yet with the bright eyes that promised a kindly, honest nature, and a power over his soldiery that sent them to the death in fighting for his sake. A third contrast was added by the presence of Ludovico Sforza, who was already beginning to be perplexed at the young King's success, and now found that Charles had completely outwitted the Florentine and secured all the best side of the bargain for Italian lands and money.

In November 1494 the French troops were marching through the streets of Pisa, gay with decorations and crowded with a wildly enthusiastic populace, crying "Liberté, Liberté," and casting down the great lion that represented the hated Signorie of Florence from its pillar over the bridge of Arno; in a few days the King's statue was there in its place; "but," says Commines, "they have since done with the King as they did with the lion, for it is the nature of the Italians to do pleasure to the strongest, though these Pisans had received such harsh treatment (from Florence) that they may be excused." Charles himself was compelled by circumstances stronger than his inclinations to behave with little kindness to this harassed town of Pisa. No sooner had he left the town upon his way to Florence, than the impossibility of his promises became clear—to support Pisa was to give deadly

offence to Florence, for, says Commines, "Pise leur est plus grande chose que Florence propre, sauf les corps et les meubles."

But the young King was too much the slave of his first honest impulses to thrive in the land of Machiavelli; he could not see much farther than the successes of the present. The whole expedition was equally uncertain in its movements and its aims; triumphal entries into Naples, Florence, even Rome itself, availed nothing; the advice of Briçonnet and De Vesc weighed as little with the young King as did the more prudent counsels of Commines or the Maréchal de Gié, and when the great league against the French with Venice at its head became a fact accomplished, there was nothing for it but retreat which all but ended in disaster.

The army had made another Capua of Naples and delayed the homeward march too long; it was stayed still further by the attractions of the Pisan ladies, and now Louis d'Orléans was blockaded in Novara. At last they were caught by the enemy at the foot of the Apennines, and death stared them in the face. "La peur," says Commines, "venait aux plus braves." Then De Gié with Jean Jacques Trivulzio and a handful of men took Pontremoli, crossed the steep pass and came down near Fornova close to the enemy, who were camped by the river

Taro, swollen with floods. While De Gié with difficulty held his dangerous position between the river and the hill, the French army laboriously climbed the same slopes he had crossed before, and for six days with bleeding hands dragged their cannon and their baggage across the pitiless rocks, in danger all the time of being cut to pieces by the enemy's attack. But the Italians waited; the Bishop of St. Malo and Philippe de Commines tried negotiations, but they failed, and the fight soon began. The King rode at the head of his troops and showed himself as brave as any of his men, and though fighting one against six the French at last cut their way through with the loss of some two hundred men against four thousand of the enemy.

Even then the advice of the more prudent was rejected; the Breton commanders and St. Malo would not recognise that there was nothing left but an honourable retreat; it was only the terrible news that kept pouring into the camp from all sides that at last decided Charles to advance towards rest and help at Asti and Turin. A peace was patched up hastily, chiefly through the negotiations of Commines, and the King got back to Lyons, where after two months came the news of the death of the little Dauphin, whose tomb is in the cathedral of Tours. This sorrow seems to have been far more bitterly felt

by the mother than by Charles, and Anne's feelings were still further hurt by the ill-restrained joy of Louis d'Orléans, who felt himself a step nearer to the throne of France.[1]

In April 1498 the King died suddenly at Amboise, in the same spring which saw the martyrdom of Savonarola, and Anne de Bretagne became for a short time a widow.

Langeais seems to have justified its existence by providing a shelter for the Breton Queen, and neither before nor after that event is there much of interest or importance in its history. But before bidding it farewell there is one more memory, a very different one, that cannot but detain a traveller in the land of Rabelais.

In 1534 the chronicler of the *Heroic Deeds of Pantagruel* was in Rome with Du Bellay, and for the next ten years remained under the protection of that

[1] Commines relates how, with a strange idea of lightening the sorrows of the Queen, Charles had in several young courtiers to dance before her, "et entre les autres y était le duc d'Orléans qui pouvait bien avoir trente quatre ans." The duke seems to have put more joy than sympathy into these ill-timed capers.

An unusual reason is given for Charles's own lack of sympathy—"ledit Dauphin," continues the same authority, "avait environ trois ans bel enfant et audacieux en parole;" and the little King seems to have feared comparison with his own shortcomings; "mais était si bon, qu'il n'est possible de voir meilleur créature." Even in an attempt at censure Commines cannot withhold his liking for the honest, ugly Charles.

house, until the death of Du Bellay, "Sieur de Langey," in 1543. We can imagine the laughter that rang through the halls of Langeais as the jovial doctor discoursed with his patron of the customs of Paris and of Rome; what would not any of us give for an hour's such talk with Rabelais? Of the four great French prose writers of the sixteenth century, says Sainte-Beuve, Rabelais remains more popular than Calvin or than Amyot, more amusing than Montaigne; nor should we see by the chimney corner at Langeais a man such as Rabelais paints himself in his book; we should see a man of science and of study, a man of good company above all, of jests and jokes incomparable. Many have admired Rabelais without appreciating him, more still have read into his honest satire opinions that he never meant, and doctrines that suited the leanings of his critics; he has been called the precursor of the Revolution, the apostle of humanitarianism, by an age that thought it honoured him in the appellation, but he was neither; he was but the frank, outspoken critic of his time, a man who wrote and spoke for men in a rougher and less fastidious age than ours. "A nation should always possess one such man," says Sainte-Beuve, "but more than one is dangerous."

Langeais was troubled, we have it on the

authority of Pantagruel, at the passing of "the generous and heroic soul of the learned Chevalier de Langey." "Il m'en souvient (dist Epistemon) et encore me frissonne et tremble le cœur dedans sa capsule, quand je pense es prodiges tant divers et horrificques." His friends and servants all in terror looked on one another in silence, without a word for the thoughts that were within them of the loss to the glory and safety of France in so perfect and good a knight. Let any one read this chapter in the Fourth Book, and the next one telling of the loud voice that called across the silence of the sea from Paxos, and cried to the sailors of Epitherses, "Pan, the great god, is dead." Let any one read these, and he will no longer leave his Rabelais to curious scholars, or condemn him as beneath the notice of the virtuous.[1]

In later years Langeais often changed owners. In 1631 it passed from the hands of Louise, daughter of Henri, Duc de Guise, to those of Cinq Mars, Marshal of France, and in 1765 to the Duc de Luynes. After another century of changes it came into the possession of its present owner, M. Siegfried. No ancient castle could possess a better

[1] For the "dernier mot" on Rabelais and the hitherto unknown Bernard Salignac to whom he attributes all his knowledge, see *Rabelais et son maître*, by Arthur Heulhard, Paris, A. Lemerre.

châtelain; all the old beauties are preserved, and the necessities of a more complex modern life are introduced with a care and an artistic feeling that leave no sense of incongruity or incompleteness. Nor are the charms of Langeais limited to its castle walls. The park that stretches out upon the hill behind the donjon of Foulques Nerra is as full of beauty of its own kind as the château. As we wandered through it on a day whose sudden showers made every gleam of sunshine lovelier, we passed several caves in the soft rock by the side of the winding road, which might have been the traces of a subterranean passage, and finally stopped where the path through tangled trees led to a little knoll crowned by a pillar with an eagle on its capital; from here there is a fine view of the windings of the Loire and the pretty little suspension bridge that leads to Candes and Anjou, close to where, as Dumas tells us, poor Monsieur Surintendant Fouquet, flying down the stream, became convinced that he was being chased by Colbert in the ugly eight-oared galley that was following him.

The river and its banks are quiet enough now, and as we passed them in the gathering twilight on our way to Tours, the resolute figure of the small Breton Queen came back to us and left a stirring memory of the halls of Langeais.

Chaumont

CHAPTER X

CHAUMONT

"Laissez faire à Georges."

CHAUMONT is within a couple of hours' drive from Blois, along the same road that skirts the northern bank of the Loire for some distance both east and west from Tours.

The river flows southward from Blois as far as Chouzy, and then taking a sharp turn to the west passes under the magnificent bridge which connects the villages of Chaumont and Onzain. From this bridge there is one of the finest views, among many, of the sweeping current of the Loire. The forest of Blois, which we had left behind us, just shows above the house-tops, and across the river the towers of the castle rise upon the wooded hill and dominate the little village by the banks.[1]

In the time of the early Angevin Counts, Chau-

[1] Evelyn, in 1644, saw this view from another direction scarcely less beautiful.

On 2nd May he writes in the *Diary:* "We took boate, passing by Charmont (*sic*), a proud castle on the left hand; before it is a sweete island deliciously shaded with tall trees."

mont was one of the outposts of the Counts of Blois towards their enemies' country, and was given to Gelduin, Lord of Saumur, after Foulques Nerra had so suddenly turned him out of his own castle by the famous night attack, which owed its supernatural swiftness—so men said—to the help of the devil. The son of this Gelduin was the first of that famous family of D'Amboise which was to give so many celebrated names to the history of France, and the Château of Amboise itself seems to have originally formed part of the same estates. But Amboise was too far off from Blois and too near the formidable Counts of Anjou and Touraine to remain in this connection for long; indeed, it was owing to a reverse in one of the perpetual wars with Henry Plantagenet that the first castle at Chaumont was razed to the ground. It was a few years after the new building had arisen that Henry II. met Thomas à Becket here for the last time before the archbishop's murder; and just before it was again completely destroyed there was born here, 1460, the most famous of his race, Georges, Cardinal d'Amboise.

This second destruction was due to the political blunders of Georges' father, Pierre d'Amboise, who, after assisting Louis XI. as Dauphin in the conspiracies of the Praguerie, was so ill-advised as to

oppose that astute monarch later on in the rebellion called the "War of the Public Weal." His punishment, the destruction of his château, suited at once Louis' principles of summary justice and his policy of weakening the nobles on every possible occasion.

But the family of D'Amboise was too powerful to remain long without a home, and in a few years the château which still exists was built at Chaumont by Philibert de l'Orme. It is not a palace, and in comparison with the gigantic bulk of Chambord seems of merely ordinary dimensions, but it is compact and perfect in itself, depending wholly on the corner towers for the necessary amount of "perpendicular accent," and showing very clearly the transition which we had already noticed at Langeais from the fortress to the later château. There are still the two great towers that guard the entrance, and on the left side towards the river another tower, that binds together the corners of the *corps de logis*, rises above the line of roofs, and plunges boldly downwards in one sweeping line through brakes and brambles to the foot of the hill.

The whole château was originally built by Charles, the brother of the Cardinal, who also held high office in the State, in the form of a quadrangle, but the fourth side towards the river, which existed

in 1681,[1] was pulled down by M. de Vaugien, a Parisian magistrate, to whom the domain belonged in 1739. The space thus opened out forms a magnificent terrace looking out upon the Loire and backed by the main buildings of the castle which have lately been restored; and with De Vigny's help it is quite possible to imagine, behind the broad windows that line the courtyard, the festive Maréchal de Bassompierre entertaining the company with his stories of Henry IV. and the Princess of Condé, while young Cinq Mars, "in a fine melancholy" at the other end of the table, is forgetting his dinner to watch the bright eyes of Marie de Gonzague for the last time before he rides away from Chaumont to the Court.

On the left hand of the entrance gate is the Cardinal's hat and coat-of-arms of Georges d'Amboise, while the porcupine of his master, Louis XII., is on the inside of the wing that joins the entrance towers.

The rise to power of the future favourite was rapid and precocious. At fourteen, when the new Chaumont was scarcely risen from its foundations, young D'Amboise was made Bishop of Montauban, and very soon became the almoner of King Louis

[1] Félibien, *Mémoires inédits sur les maisons royales de France.*

XI. in a Court where he would have the best of training in the art of holding his tongue and managing political intrigues expeditiously and quietly. Of this sagacity he soon gave proof. In the conspiracy of Louis d'Orléans against Anne de Beaujeu he was arrested with Commines for complicity in the plot, but by making use of the bold defence that if he had persuaded Charles VIII. to leave the protection of the Regent he had also clearly acted on the express wishes of the King, he met the chief charge of his accusers and escaped the cage and imprisonment from which Commines suffered at Loches.

D'Amboise's connection with the Duke of Orleans was judiciously maintained during the whole of Charles VIII.'s reign, and while Louis was governor of Normandy, D'Amboise, as Archbishop of Rouen, was of material assistance in crushing out the brigandage and violence which were rampant at that time in the north of France. Later on, he was with the duke at Asti and Novara, and supported with his patron the charge of malpractices which was again brought against them on their return from Italy.

In a short time the Duke of Orleans was Louis XII., and Georges d'Amboise found himself one of the chief supporters of the throne of France.

But higher dignities still were to come to D'Amboise from the Italy which had just been somewhat ingloriously left. Amidst the numerous intrigues of the Papal Court, Cæsar Borgia found himself in need of one more dupe, of an instrument by whose means he could influence the powerful Court of France, and whose personal ambition would be served by a closer connection with the politics of Rome; a Briçonnet had already been found,[1] another like him was soon forthcoming; Georges d'Amboise answered all the requirements of Cæsar Borgia, and to all the daring of Briçonnet he added a greater shrewdness, a more capable intellect, and a more assured position of command. An opportunity soon offered itself for the Papal Court to fulfil its promises.

The unhappy Jeanne de France had from the first been disliked by her husband, and it only needed the touch of pathos which Scott has supplied in the suggestion of her own unrequited passion, to complete a picture of distress and misery rarely found in the story of a French princess. Louis XII., when King, was only too glad to add reasons of State to his own personal repugnance, and

[1] After D'Amboise's death there is yet another French ecclesiastic who is ready to play the same rôle, the infamous Du Prat, the Chancellor of Louise de Savoie. Biragues, of the St. Bartholomew, is another instance later on.

with singular brutality[1] to repudiate this faithful and uncomplaining wife. Jeanne died in 1504 at Bourges, and Anne de Bretagne reigned in her stead. It is not impossible that certain recollections of the young duchess during his campaign in Brittany may have come back to Louis after the death of her first husband had given him the throne; in any case the care for her own future which the Breton had shown in the marriage settlement at Langeais now had its result. For the second time Anne was a Queen of France, and for the second time the usual businesslike agreement was drawn up as to her own estates and property—it will be seen that the strongly-marked characteristics of her earlier years show themselves in a far more decided manner during this second period of her power. Though Anne never really cared for the true interests of France, she was only too glad to join D'Amboise in managing the King, and the bitterness of her disappointment at having no male issue warped her pride and natural tenacity into a fatally misguided policy from which France was only saved by her death.

[1] Jean Bouchet (*Panégyrique de la Trémouille*) gives a far too flattering account of this transaction; for what actually happened see *Procédures Politiques du règne de Louis XII.* (M. de Maulde), in which is also the Life of the Maréchal de Gié.

It was in the preliminaries to this royal marriage that Rome began to show her influence with the Court of France. The papal bull necessary for the King's divorce was brought to Chinon by Cæsar Borgia, and the same hand gave Georges d'Amboise his Cardinal's hat. Michelet, describing the statue on the Cardinal's tomb at Rouen, one of the finest monuments of the time in France, calls it a peasant face; it is certainly no courtier that kneels there in his flowing robes before the carving of his patron saint slaying the dragon, but it is far more than a peasant: a peculiarly square head, with deep, low eyebrows, long upper lip, heavy jaw, and that firmness of character expressed in every line of bone and muscle which seldom goes with physical beauty, but seldom fails to be impressive. This is no peasant parvenu, no Jean Balue, but a noble from the valley of the Loire, who had but given up the dignities of his own state to please the King whom he had served before the little Dauphin's death had given Orleans a throne, the King whose weakness he thoroughly understood and vigorously guided, and whose strength, which consisted in a genuine love for the people of France, D'Amboise knew equally well how to direct into broad schemes of national security and unflinching administration of justice. If Louis' blunders in foreign politics could

be redeemed at all, they were redeemed by the internal administration of his kingdom; the evil counsels of the Italian Borgia or of his Breton wife were counterbalanced by the good order, the economy, and the reforms introduced by Cardinal d'Amboise into the French Government, which was sorely in need of help after the disorders of the last reign.

And if the Cardinal might fairly be reproached with an exaggerated ambition, a great longing for the highest place which the Church had to offer,[1] it was an ambition to which even stronger heads than his were to give way—the patriotism of Wolsey was no more free from the desire for the tiara than were the schemes of the French Cardinal, to whom the Englishman has so often been compared. No other man, say his contemporary critics, was so fitted for the papal throne as Cardinal d'Amboise; and the help of a countryman in so exalted a position would have been of no slight service to the King of France, who never saw his way clearly through the shifting kaleidoscope of European politics, and came utterly to grief after the Cardinal's death.

It is difficult to be severe in judging a king who stands almost alone in his affection for every class

[1] There is a medal of this time with the head of the Cardinal on one side and on the other the papal tiara and keys, with the legend "tulit alter honores."

of his subjects. Torn in sunder by the disputes of the great barons of Charles VI.'s reign, harassed by the terrible English invasions, with no comprehension of the tortuous policy of Louis XI., and no sympathy with the scatterbrained chivalry of his son, the people of France welcomed with a universal outburst of gratitude the rest and relief from taxation which this " Father of his Country " gave them, a rest which was only to be a brief breathing-space before the renewed restlessness, the extravagant expenditures of the reign of Francis I.

Nor was Louis XII. a King apart, a monarch unseen and unappreciated.[1] From his favourite home at Blois he had for long exercised a beneficent, if somewhat unthinking and indolent, influence over the central populations of the valley of the Loire. The young duke who appears in the high-shouldered fur cape with its long squared sleeves, in the round velvet cap that hides the lowness of the forehead and the heavy straight black hair of the portrait in the Gaignières collection, had grown into a stout, good-humoured, idle King, with full thick lips and heavy cheeks, a King with all the dreaminess of Charles d'Orléans and little of his originality, who could rule respectably and comfortably at home, but must fail hopelessly whenever the quick

[1] See the panegyric of his reign written by Claude Seyssel.

initiative of foreign expeditions was demanded of him.

The young gallants of the Court who had tasted of adventure in the campaigns of Charles VIII. could not rest quiet upon this side of the Alps: the results of Cæsar Borgia's embassy now became evident as well, and probably the schemes of Cardinal d'Amboise in connection with a possible election to the papacy would have been alone sufficient to induce the easy-going King to avenge his ill-fortune at Novara and make a fresh attack on Italy. The proceedings of Ludovico il Moro finally decided Louis. The story of the defeat and capture of Sforza has been already told.

This first campaign brought much importance to the Cardinal, who, as the representative of the King of France, and surrounded by the Marshal Trivulzio, the Bishop of Luçon, the Seigneur de Grammont, and many other notables, received in solemn state a deputation from the penitent Milanese, who " with four thousand little children, their heads bared, and clad in humble garments," as Jean d'Auton tells us, came in procession to entreat the favour of the Cardinal, who showed them by the mouth of one Michael Ris " leur déloyaute damnable, inexcusable trahison et irréparables défauts," and promised them their lives for the present and an examina-

tion of their requests for the future; after which the little children passing before him cried aloud, "France! France! miséricorde!"

A still more picturesque scene followed shortly afterwards at Pisa. For some time this unhappy town had enjoyed "a hazardous and agonised attempt at liberty," while Entragues and the French garrison which came in with Charles VIII.'s army refused to leave the citadel and abandon Pisa to Florence, her bitter enemy; and now the French envoys, who had been sent with difficult words of negotiation concerning the detested Florentine supremacy, were surrounded by "five or six hundred" young girls dressed in white, with two aged dames to lead them, and singing sweetly, 'devant l'image de Nôtre-Dame commencèrent les pucelles à chanter tant piteusement, et de voix si très lamentables que là n'y eut Français ni autre à qui du plus profond endroit du cœur jusqu'aux yeux ne montassent les chaudes larmes." With their tears and blandishments they so won the hearts of the rough soldiers that fighting became for the time impossible for mutual admiration; the influence of women that was to exercise so great a power in France for the next century had begun, and had introduced one more disturbing element into the already confused system of Italian politics.

The next campaign was more disastrous for the arms of France, as was indeed only to be expected. The prodigies of valour performed by the Chevalier Bayard at the bridge of the Garigliano, and admiringly chronicled by the "Loyal Servitor," were not able to avert defeat from La Trémouille at the hands of the capable and politic General Gonsalvo di Cordova.

Between Cæsar Borgia and the Catholic King Ferdinand, France had been duped. The Spaniards had been let in by Naples, Cæsar Borgia had conquered the Romagna and taken in even Machiavelli, who was to give him immortality. The tragedies of the Vatican had but produced fresh complications for the French. Alexander VI. was carried a blackened swollen corpse, horribly slain by his own poisons, into St. Peter's, and Cæsar Borgia, almost unconscious and weakened at the very crisis of his fate by a mysteriously similar disorder, was chased out of Italy to die obscurely in a skirmish fighting for John d'Albret in Spain. The tiara had been very near to Georges d'Amboise, and there can unhappily be little doubt that it was his delaying of the French army, for interested motives, within reach of Rome, that hastened the disaster of Garigliano.

But a still greater blow to the true interests of

France was only just averted at home. The misguided ambitions of Anne de Bretagne, dangerously strengthened by her Breton pluck and energy, had very nearly succeeded in giving to one man the crowns of France, Spain, Austria, and the Netherlands, in delivering up France to the power that was instinctively and most bitterly opposed to her. Her designs of marrying her daughter Claude to the child who was to become the Emperor Charles V. were most fortunately frustrated by the resolutions of the Estates of Tours.

But what little good had been effected by these was soon almost annulled by the blunders of the League of Cambrai. Venice was to be attacked, and Genoa to be humbled for her presumption in turning out the aristocratic party; money was raised by the disgraceful method of selling the wretched Pisans to their cruel masters in Florence. So ill begun, this third Italian campaign was to continue with steadily-increasing ill-success. The new Pope, Julian de la Rovère, who had outwitted Cardinal d'Amboise and firmly established his power in the Vatican and the Romagna, soon turned round and joined Venice against France, and Louis XII. was still further weakened by the death of his old friend and steadfast counsellor, Georges d'Amboise.

Though the Cardinal died an immensely wealthy

man, he had spent his riches lavishly, and made the best use of his opportunities for the encouragement of art with foreign models and Italian workmen; but his loss as a statesman was far more severely felt. The good work he had begun in Normandy, "avec le titre effrayant de réformateur général," he had carried on throughout all the tribunals of France by means of his celebrated "ordonnances." In Italy, with the assistance of his brother Charles, Seigneur de Chaumont, he had invariably upheld the interests of France and guided the uncertain steps of the King through the maze of European politics with a hand that rarely faltered save when his one great fault became conspicuous, his too obvious ambition of the papal power. But it is on his home policy that his fame chiefly rests—his revision of justice, his measures for averting the famine while the so-called plague was devastating France, his swift repression of brigandage and violence.

His death, which was felt as a relief at the Vatican, was the signal for confusion in the mind of Louis. Austria and England were against him, the Pope had joined Ferdinand and Venice, and Louis felt the necessity of rousing himself to action. A new national infantry was formed by La Palice with a backbone of five thousand Gascons, and the young

Gaston de Foix, the last of the house of Armagnac, the direct descendants of Clovis, at its head. The counsels of the veteran Marshal de Gié were lost to the King as well at this critical moment. Some years before he had been exiled by a disgraceful process, whose details only serve to throw into stronger light the honour and integrity of a life spent in loyal devotion to his country.

Besides all this, Louis was becoming more and more perplexed at the attitude of Margaret of Flanders. At all hazards, her father, Maximilian the Emperor, must be kept on the side of France, so at all hazards a victory must be won.

In the terrible day before Ravenna the French advanced between a double row of enemies, while the Spanish cannon " fired into the French infantry as into a great target, and killed more than two thousand of them before they came to blows." The Loyal Servitor and Bayard were fighting with the rest, and some sharp skirmishing followed between the cavalry of both sides; but it was the firm battalions of the newly-organised infantry that won the day for the French after fearful losses upon both sides. Bayard had warned the young Duc de Nemours to stay where he was after the battle had been decided, but Gaston saw some Spaniards making for Ravenna, and could not let them go

unmolested. Riding out, directly his Gascons had told him of their passage, he attacked them furiously upon a narrow road with a canal on one side and a deep ditch on the other. He was almost alone with his cousin Lautrec, and was soon surrounded. When his charger was hamstrung, " he leaped down and sword in hand did braver deeds than ever did Roland at Roncevaux," and fell with all his wounds in front, and fourteen on his face. Bayard met the Spaniards at the other end of the road, some ten miles on, and not knowing of the death of the brave Gaston de Foix, let them pass safely on their way.

The tide of fortune had completely turned against the French, and round the same Novara which had seen so many crises of this unlucky war, La Trémouille was defeated and Italy was lost. But the quarrel over Milan, Naples, and Sicily was not yet fought out: Francis of Angoulême, the descendant of Valentine Visconti, claimed Milan because he was the heir to France by rights that were impregnable, until they were for ever lost at Pavia. The son of Francis, when he became Dauphin, missed one more chance of Milan, and the husband of Catherine de Medicis lost all hope of an Italian kingdom, which ended by being fast held by the Spaniards.

The crown of the two Sicilies, which was first held

by the descendants of the Norman Robert Guiscard, had been claimed by the house of Hohenstaufen, and was in 1254 given by the Pope, who somewhat feared such strong neighbours, to the brother of Saint Louis, Charles d'Anjou. The quarrel that inevitably resulted was handed on through Louis XI., to whom René d'Anjou bequeathed his rights, to the Kings of France and even, through the house of Lorraine, to the Guises, who actually revived the old title, which had belonged to Anjou, of King of Jerusalem.[1] The new desire of national aggrandisement was joined to the fatal spirit of adventure, without losing the old religious ideal that had given nothing but a visionary basis to the policy of France, and uselessly wasted much French blood and treasure; the Sicilian Vespers were not redeemed by Marignano, and after the reign of Louis XII. the story of the French in Italy[2] closes in the defeat of Pavia and the excesses of the Constable Bourbon.

In 1513 died the Queen, Anne de Bretagne, at Blois. Fleurange and the Loyal Servitor describe the distress of Louis at the loss of her, but besides the King, and the poor whom she had assisted with

[1] Creighton's *Papacy*.

[2] "The story," that is, of the French in the period covered by these chapters, but it was not until the days of Napoleon that it was renewed.

her alms, there were not many to whom her death should have been a serious loss.[1]

Louis seemed more bewildered than ever in his attempts to distinguish the right path in the " danse Macabre " of European politics that followed. At last, amid the general quarrelling Henry VIII. of England gave Mary Tudor to be wife of the French King—a strong young Englishwoman, who killed off Louis within a year. There would be something ludicrous, if it were not pathetic, in the last months of this weak, easy-going King; he evidently was quite at a loss how to manage the young princess, and brought up his daughter Claude, Louise de Savoie, even old Anne de Beaujeu, to try and help him humour her.

" He had been used to dine at eight in the morning, now he dined at noon; his habit was to go to bed at six, and now he was often up till midnight," with the inevitable result of a serious illness which killed him by New Year's Day.

[1] In the Library of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, there is a memorial of Anne de Bretagne in the two volumes of an illustrated Bible presented by General Oglethorpe. The pictures were made for Louis XII., whose porcupine is conspicuous on the frontispiece, and for his Queen, whose cordelière is repeated on almost every page: it is probably the work of Jean Perréal, and should be compared with the same Queen's *Livre d'Heures,* part of which is in the Library of Tours, part in the Bibl. Nat.

In 1559 Catherine de Medicis was at Chaumont. She had bought the property not so much for her own use as to provide herself with a suitable exchange for the more beautiful Chenonceaux, where her husband's favourite Diana had made herself so fair a home; and when the death of Henry II. brought Catherine into power, she turned Diana out and effected the desired exchange. But the Duchesse de Valentinois preferred Anet and the statue of Jean Goujon to Chaumont and the memories of Cardinal d'Amboise, so she too hardly visited the castle at all, and Chaumont for the next two centuries continually changed hands.

In 1739 Italy was again predominant, and the chimneys built by M. le Ray were smoking with the furnaces that baked the pottery and medallions of the Italian Nini. In 1803 Madame de Staël, in graceful exile, was chatting to Benjamin Constant on the long terrace above the river—the patron of Italian pottery had gone to lose his fortune on the other side of the Atlantic.

The firm tenure of its earlier proprietors seemed never destined to be repeated in the history of Chaumont, and the castle saw several more masters before coming into the possession of its present owner, the Duc de Broglie, by whom the old rooms are kept up in all the beauty and the interest of their earlier days.

Through the Salle des Gardes, all hung with tapestry, with its Italian fire-dogs of wrought iron, the visitor is led into the room of Diane de Poitiers, built in the thickness of the entrance tower. Her face looks down upon him from the wall, a calm, cold face beneath a crescent, that wears well, and will not be wrinkled or defaced by passion; the three crescents and her monogram entwined with the royal H, show on the old tiling of the floor.

The great Salle de Conseil when we saw it was in a state of preparation for a "comédie, to be played by the Tsiganes from Paris," said the concièrge, and much of the fine oak carving with which the room was filled was hidden by the stage and its accessories; but a more interesting apartment is farther on, the chamber of Catherine de Medicis, with its ancient bed and curtains, and its old worn prie-dieu beneath a curious group carved in one piece of oak.

Here is to be seen the oldest tapestry of all, worked in soft colours of old rose and pink; beside the door a blinded Love with rose-red wings and quiver walks on the flushing paths, surrounded by strange scrolls and mutilated fragments of old verses; upon the wall in front are ladies with their squires attending, clad all in pink and playing mandolins, while by the stream that curves through

flowery meadows small rosy children feed the water-birds that seem to blush with pleasure beneath the willow boughs of faded red. Much of the furniture of Chaumont does not possess the antiquity with which it has been associated, but these impossible landscapes with their quaint colouring and strange folk that people them may well have been here, with the old wrought-iron candlestick that stands before them, when Catherine de Medicis was wearing the extinguisher dress with its pink underskirt and deep fur sleeves in which she is portrayed in the next chamber, known as the "Chambre de Ruggieri." Upon the ceiling of this room are painted the dates when she and Cardinal d'Amboise were respectively at Chaumont, about a century apart, and in one corner the old weights stamped with the fleur-de-lys still suggest the reforms which D'Amboise carried out in the course of his strong government of France.

But a more especial memory of him is in the chapel, which is built in the form of a Greek cross with flamboyant windows. From the gallery that opens out into the west end from the upper stories of the house, we could see his old red Cardinal's hat still hanging above the carved chair in which he sat upon the altar steps; there is a portrait of him too close by, so we were told, but we found it hard to

The Château of Chaumont
General view from the South East

recognise in this cavalier countenance with its moustache and imperial, and a very "roving eye," the stern lines of the Cardinal's rugged face upon his tomb at Rouen.

We descended to the courtyard again by the great staircase which sweeps in bold curving steps round the central pillar, and left the castle still thinking of "The Last Judgment" that hangs in the Chapel gallery. "The river of the wrath of God," and the countless souls caught up to heaven or dashed into the depths, seemed the true picture of the Italy of Georges d'Amboise, drawn by the real conscience of Italy herself, by him who alone had seized the spirit of the time, the mighty Michael Angelo.

Reign of Francis I.

CHAPTER XI

REIGN OF FRANCIS I.

"Pharaoh, King of Egypt, is but a noise; he hath let the appointed time pass by."

"I promise you the effects he writes of succeed unhappily . . . death, dearth, dissolution of ancient amities, divisions in State, menaces and maledictions against King and nobles, needless diffidences, banishment of friends, dissipation of cohorts, nuptial breaches, and I know not what."

THE house of Valois provided heirs for the French throne for long after the direct line had died out; the line of Valois-Orléans had come in for a brief space and died without descendants, like its predecessors; that of Valois-Angoulême was now to appear, with whom the dynasty was to perish before the end of the century, blighted by the full measure of the remorseless curse which Italy had laid on France.

But this last line began with a splendour which seemed to give but little presage of the ruin that was to come: there were probably few living besides the King himself who foresaw in the brilliant young Comte d'Angoulême [1] the man who was to undo all

[1] "The boy will spoil everything," sighed Louis.

the good work of the previous reign and reap the full measure of its errors and his own.

At Amboise we shall meet the young duke growing between the evil angel and the good, his mother and his sister Margaret; there, too, beside the grave of the greatest of the Italians whom he favoured, we shall be able to appreciate his claims to praise as an art patron; but at none of the many châteaux of Touraine, where his influence is so conspicuous, can we catch a glimpse of Francis clear enough to serve as guide in judging of his character or of the value of his reign; not even at Chambord, that grotesque giant of the royal pleasure-houses, the Chambord which Brantôme saw even in his time but half-achieved, shall we find more than an indication of his reckless expenditure and unmeaning lavishness in the strange labyrinths of stone upon its roof, or a trace of the only lesson he could draw from the intrigues of a misspent existence in the cynical distich traced by his diamond ring upon the lost window-pane of his cabinet.

The delicate perfection of the staircase in the wing at Blois, by which the buildings of Louis XII. were completed in the reign of Francis, remains to show that something better than Chambord was within the compass of French art, and possibly indicates that by the good taste of his wife Claude, who loved

her old home in her father's favourite château, the strong and true instinct of the national school found more support than in the dilettante passion of Francis for the teaching of Florence and of Rome.

Yet so full is this Loire valley of the memory and the praise of Francis that we must stop for a while, before wandering farther along the river's banks, to take some measure of this prince's worth, and to look closer at his gentle, mystical sister, Marguerite d'Angoulême, Queen of Navarre. Upon their mother we have fortunately no need to dwell; in the most iniquitous trial of the reign, in the most horrible siege of that lawless generation, we shall see traces enough of the meanness of Louise de Savoie and the misgovernment of her despicable favourite the Chancellor Du Prat.

The character of Francis does not gain by a close inspection; and in this he is not unlike one of our own kings, Richard, son of the great Plantagenet, who figured as the perfect Paladin of ancient chivalry in many a poem and romance, who wasted English blood and treasure on visionary and useless expeditions, who only used his country, for the few months he ever spent in it, as a means of raising fresh supplies, and died at last fighting for an ignoble cause in an almost unknown corner of his French dominions.

It is much the same with this belated Amadis of Gaul, who took the Salamander for his device, but came out anything but unscathed from the furnace of his destiny. Perhaps no prince ever had so great an opportunity, and so lightly lost the chances of a time that was never to return. "The spoilt boy" of Amboise remained a childish adventurer, a mere stripling in intellect, to his life's end; the mature years which bring to graver men a power of judgment and a gift of true perspective brought little to Francis but an untimely weakening of bodily force, a fretful chafing at the reverses of his fortune. And this is obvious from a consideration of the way in which he met the two great influences with which his reign was brought in contact, the policy of the Emperor from without, the rising forces of the Reformation from within. "The Emperor tries in everything to do the very reverse of what I do," he complains to the Venetian ambassador Capello,[1] and a peevish sense of opposition, a small personal rivalry, is all that Francis saw in the famous struggle with Charles V. in which he failed, as he was bound to fail, in matching the puerile and unreasoning passion of a fantastic chivalry against the cold personification of an idea which made up the sombre character of Charles V. No greater contrast was

[1] *Rel. des Ambass. Venitiens,* Francesco Giustiniano, 1537.

ever presented upon contemporary thrones of Europe than the lives of these two princes, nor would it be fair to judge of the French King by a comparison with his rival, who represented the opposite extreme of thought and feeling.

The child of a woman who lost her reason, a sickly, epileptic youth,[1] Charles V. grew up to be one of the strongest, the most original figures in his time. Strange ideas of mysticism, of theocracy, mingle in this prematurely aged mind, and show themselves early in the subtlety and skill of the practised politician. Losing the penetrating influence that comes of human sympathy, he found nothing but the dogma of authority left to guide him in the rigid and indifferent system of a policy implacable as fate. Within three years Charles V. had conquered Montezuma in Mexico, and taken Francis prisoner at Pavia, yet against so redoubtable a foe the French King could only produce a fluctuating policy of ill-planned sieges and cartels of defiance. Accepting bravely, and with a full understanding, the position of opponent to the Emperor, Francis might have joined in one irresistible league the many forces antagonistic to the powers and aims of Spain and Austria, have secured the co-operation of England and the northern provinces of Germany,

[1] Coignet, *Fin de la vieille France* [*de Vieilleville*], cap. xix.

and offered a compact and invincible resistance to the scattered armies of the Empire; but this he never realised, scarcely attempted. The Turks, who might have been left as a useful counterpoise to the eastern extremity of the Empire, and a standing menace to Vienna, were alternately summoned into the waters of the Mediterranean and menaced by the empty threat of a crusade; so, too, the Protestants, whose natural champion Francis was against the tyranny of Spain, were sometimes encouraged by alliances, sometimes burnt as heretics at the stake. The mistakes of Francis beyond the boundaries of his kingdom were not redeemed by any benefits conferred upon the populace within, and to the second of the two influences of his reign which were just mentioned Francis gives no more enlightened comprehension than to the first.

If Francis had encouraged the reform at all, it was only with the uncertain favour of a royal patron of research and letters; the sympathies of his sister with Calvin or with Marot had a deeper strain in them that was foreign to his nature. "Ne parlons point de celle-là, elle m'aime trop," he says to Montmorency, with a selfish satisfaction in her love for him that obscured any appreciation of the doctrines which she favoured.

Yet these doctrines of the Reformation were

already deeply grafted in the soil of France. By the desolation of the civil wars, by the struggle of the Huguenot party against the forces of the nation, may be measured the depth and sincerity of the convictions from which those doctrines sprang; and these civil wars were made possible by the political incapacity of Francis I., which, in spite of his occasional generous and lofty impulses, led him to precipitate the centralising movement of despotic monarchy. The same incapacity was renewed in Henry II., aggravated by a weakness of the Crown which permitted the formation of political parties. The Spanish marriage laid France open to the sombre and cruel fanaticism of Philip II., and the ruin was completed by the insatiable ambition, the astounding audacity of the Guises, favoured by the protection of their niece, Marie Stuart, on the throne of France; the weakness, the irresolution, the lying spirit of Catherine de Medicis abandoned the nation first to one party and then to the other, and ended in never forming a national party at all.[1]

The reign of Francis opened characteristically with a magnificent expedition. "Madame," he writes to Louise de Savoie, who was left at home as Regent, "nous sommes dans le plus étrange pays où jamais fut homme de cette compagnie." One

[1] Coignet, *François I.*, p. xli.

more expedition to Italy was starting with all the brilliancy of which the chivalry of France was capable. Upon the King's tomb in St. Denis the patient horses still tramp up the passes of the Alps, hauling the "grosse artillerie,"[1] while behind them wave the plumes of the lansquenets and their long pikes leading the infantry, each man with a heavy arquebuse upon his shoulder.

Just before the battle the King was knighted by Bayard. "In truth," cries the good Chevalier, "you are the first prince whom ever I made knight; please God you never run away in battle." Marignano, at any rate, was a glorious victory, the first great fight the French had won since Agincourt. Bayard, and Pierre de Navarre with his "enfants perdus,"[2] and Lautrec were with the army; and Francis himself was fighting bravely with the rest, drinking the only water that could be got, all befouled with blood, when he was thirsty, and sleeping through the restless night upon a gun carriage.[3]

[1] "Il nous fâche fort de porter le harnois parmi ces Montagnes . . . croyez, Madame, que ce n'est pas sans peine; car si je ne fusse arrivé, notre grosse artillerie fût demeurée. Mais, Dieu merci, je la mène avec moi."—*Lettres de François I.* Ap. Mignet, *Rivalité de François I. et de Charles V.*

[2] "Nos lansquenets en . . . trois troupes . . . la tièrce d'environ quatre mille hommes, que l'on appelle les enfants perdus de Pierre de Navarre."—*Letter of Francis I. to Louise de Savoie, 13th September* 1515, Michaud et Poujoulat, i. v.

[3] Fleurange "l'adventureux," who was knighted by the King

It had been better for Francis if this splendid victory, the last triumph of the feudal chivalry, had never been won; it was a dangerous precedent, that led the unthinking King into the defeat of Pavia; and the glitter of foreign successes was by no means reflected in prosperity at home, for Louise de Savoie and Du Prat were paramount in the affairs of State, and the Concordat had introduced a new system into ecclesiastical affairs, a system which was to result in the rise of the great political Churchmen, the favourites of kings who, by their own dissolute lives, were to condone the vices of their patrons. Yet one of the greatest of these same Churchmen might have been of service to Francis now, for he never learnt the lesson which it took a Richelieu to enforce, that France was stronger at home, and relying on her natural wealth and her unequalled situation, than she could ever be abroad.

And now the greatest of Francis' opportunities was to come and go. With all the prestige of his Italian campaign, with the borrowed lustre of his

after the battle, gives many details of the fighting. "Et demanda le dit seigneur (François) à boire, car il était fort altéré. Et y eut un piéton qui lui alla querir de l'eau qui était toute pleine de sang, qui fit tant de mal audit seigneur, avec le grand chaud, qu'il ne lui demeura rien dans le corps; et se mit dans une charette d'artillerie pour soi un peu se reposer et pour soulager son cheval qui était fort blessé."

supposed protectorate of art and the Renaissance, Francis might well have posed as the champion of Europe against the encroaching powers of Spain and Austria, might well have carried the election against the silent and almost unknown Charles. But he was beaten in the election, and wasted the precious time afterwards in the useless pageant of the Field of the Cloth of Gold—a display in which Henry VIII. could perhaps better sympathise with the French King than any other reigning monarch would have done.

All the time his enemy was quietly plotting and combining, strengthening himself at home, even interviewing that same English King soon after the unprofitable festival in France had ended, and quietly coming to some kind of earnest understanding with him about the policy of Europe. And yet the first blow comes from Francis. To the north he sends out the Duc d'Alençon,[1] to the south Bonnivet, and Lautrec to Milan. The one chance that presented itself of crushing the Imperialists and even Charles himself was lost, and Lautrec was ignominiously beaten.

[1] Clement Marot celebrates this campaign in the verses beginning—

> "Devers Haynault sur les fins de Champaigne
> Est arrivé le bon duc d'Alençon,
> Avec honneur qui toujours l'accompaigne
> Comme le sien propre et vrai écusson," etc.

This last officer was received but coldly by the King on his return, for Francis was sore at the loss of the coveted duchy of Milan; but Lautrec stoutly answered that the whole fault lay with his Majesty, who had been warned several times that without more money [1] Milan would be lost. The King in astonishment replied that four hundred thousand crowns had been despatched directly the request for them had reached him. Jacques de Beaune Semblançay, Superintendent of Finance, was forthwith summoned to explain matters, and announced that he had indeed received the money for despatch to Italy, but had handed it over to the King's mother, Louise de Savoie, upon her express command, and this he was prepared to prove.[2] He was thrown

[1] The Swiss had deserted after the battle of Birocca, because their pay was not forthcoming. Lautrec felt able to speak boldly: he was the brother of the Comtesse de Châteaubriand.

[2] See Du Bellay's *Mémoires* (Martin du Bellay, xvii. 221). The scene is continued as follows:—"Le roi alla en la chambre de ladite dame avec visage courroucé, se plaignant du tort qu'elle lui avait fait d'être cause de la perte dudit duché; chose qu'il n'eût jamais estimé d'elle, que d'avoir retenu ses deniers qui avaient été ordonnés pour le secours de son armée. Elle s'excusant dudit fait fut mandé ledit Seigneur de Semblançay, qui maintint son dire être vrai; mais elle dit que c'étaient deniers que ledit S. lui avait de longtemps gardés, procédant de l'épargne qu'elle avait faite de son revenu; et lui soutenait le contraire."

On questions of fact it is possible to take Martin du Bellay

into prison by Louise, and for five years he was kept unjustly confined while her odious instrument Du Prat tried to heap up accusations against the most honourable man of his time, who under Charles VIII. and Louis XII. had held the same perilous office without a stain upon his character. The very warrant which at last condemned him, in August 1527, could not bring any precise accusations against the prisoner, but on a general charge of malversation decreed his death upon the gibbet of Montfaucon. For six hours he stayed by the scaffold waiting in vain for the royal pardon that never came, and at seven in the evening was hanged amid the indignation of the whole of France.[1] The

as an authority, though Montaigne warns us against believing his deductions, and being taken in by all his praise of François I. "Pour avoir l'entière connaissance," says the essayist, "du roi François et des choses advenues de son temps, qu'on s'addresse ailleurs, si on m'en croit." Even in this episode we have to seek elsewhere for the details of the disgraceful condemnation in which this trial ended.

[1] Clement Marot's verses express the feeling of the time—

"Lorsque Maillard, juge d'enfer, menait
À Montfaucon Semblançay l'âme rendre,
À votre avis lequel des deux tenait
Meilleur maintien? pour vous le faire entendre,
Maillard semblait homme que mort va prendre,
Et Semblançay fut si ferme vieillard
Que l'on cuidait pour vrai qu'il menât pendre
À Montfaucon le lieutenant Maillard."

One of Semblançay's houses was at Ballan, near Tours.

death of this just man is one of the blackest stains upon the reign of Francis. He should never have allowed the meanness and cupidity of his mother to have such terrible results:[1] but an even worse instance of the evil which this despicable woman could bring to pass was soon to be seen in the extraordinary episode of the Constable Bourbon.

Anne, who was Regent in the first years of Charles VIII., had by her husband, Pierre de Bourbon, a child, Suzanne, who had been at first betrothed to the Duc d'Alençon; but feeling a greater attraction towards the young Charles, Duc de Montpensier, a younger son of the great house of Bourbon, she married her daughter to him in spite of the opposition of the King. Georges d'Amboise performed the ceremony of betrothal. Michelet has pointed

[1] There is practically no doubt that Louise de Savoie obtained this money upon false pretences, stole or made away with the receipts, and sacrificed Semblançay to avoid discovery, for avarice was among her many sins. She died with fifteen hundred thousand gold crowns in her money chests. Gaillard (*Hist. de François I.*, 1769) quotes two letters, one from Semblançay, the other of her own, which conclusively prove these facts. In Sauval (*Antiquités de Paris*, i. 482) are reported the details of the execution at Montfaucon, quoted from a manuscript journal, and Du Bouchet (*Annales d'Aquitaine*) describes the long wait by the gibbet, and the last words of the old man when he found himself abandoned by the King. Even Brantôme cannot gloss over the iniquity of the proceedings, though he shifts the blame as much as possible from Francis to his mother.

out the mistake made by a daughter of Louis XI. in thus concentrating in the bold and reckless person of the young duke such vast feudal possessions.[1] A few years after his marriage we find the duke with Louis XII. before Genoa, and with an important command at Milan; later on he is with young Gaston de Foix at Ravenna, and is made Constable of France by Francis. At Marignano he is in the vanguard of the army, which had already owed so much to his care and guidance in the passes of the Alps, and in 1517 the King himself assists at the magnificent baptismal fêtes of the duke's son and heir at Montlieu. But Bourbon had already reached the summit of his fortunes, and a change was at hand. The covetousness and rancour of Louise de Savoie had already led her to detest the greatness of the Constable and the virtue of his wife, and for some time she had been striving to prejudice the King against them. In 1521 the first blow was struck, the first insult given, the command of the vanguard was transferred to the Duc d'Alençon.

[1] See Du Bellay's *Mémoires*, and Marillac, *Vie du Connétable*. The Constable united in himself the various dignities of Bourbon, Auvergne, Montpensier, Foix, and La Marche; in the south, Carlet, Murat, and Annonay; in the east, Beaujolais and Dombes; besides the possessions in Poitou and Picardy, which he held as the descendant of St. Louis, and the emoluments resulting from his public offices.

Misfortunes followed thick and fast. All his three children died, and were followed by their mother to the tomb. This was the moment for Louise de Savoie to appear. She immediately laid claim to all the lands of the Constable that had come to him through Suzanne de Bourbon, as being the nearer relation of the two; and an even more odious motive for her hatred soon became apparent. Reckless in her desires as she was unprincipled in action, Louise had conceived for the Constable a passion which was repulsed with all the aversion and disdain it merited. This added the most poignant motive to her spite. By the machinations of her creatures, Du Prat, Poyet, and the Advocate-General Lizet, she at length drove the Constable in sheer despair into treason and exile. Some of his accomplices we have already met with in the dungeons of Loches. Bourbon himself, his plots against the throne discovered, fled out of France,[1] and threw himself under the protection of the Emperor, who was but too glad to receive so welcome an ally. The sequel is worthy of so terrible a beginning, and the tragedy of his life ended in the sack of Rome.

After two such disasters within his kingdom the fortunes of Francis fared no better abroad. In the

[1] The details of the flight are given in Du Bellay's *Mémoires.*

spring of 1525 a letter was brought to Louise de Savoie from Pizzighitone. "Madame," wrote the King, "pour vous faire savoir comme se porte le reste de mon infortune, de toutes choses ne m'est demeuré que l'honneur [1] et la vie qui est sauve." Pavia had been lost, the King had barely escaped with life, and the little houour he had left was to be cast aside in the bitter trial of his captivity. It was in great part his own want of generalship which had lost the battle—he made an attack in front of his own guns "tellement qu'il couvrit son artillerie et lui ôta le moyen de jouer son jeu" (Du Bellay). Cut off by the enemy completely, he had his horse killed under him, and was borne to the ground and taken prisoner; Bonnivet and old Louis de la Trémouille were killed fighting by his side; [2] Chabannes fell with the vanguard; the Maréchal de Foix, the Bastard of Savoy, and many more were captured by the enemy. After some delay the King was moved to Madrid and kept a close prisoner in the castle.

France was now deprived not only of the head of her Government, but of many of her best

[1] The origin of the famous "Tout est perdu fors l'honneur."

[2] Du Bellay describes the battle, and Sébastien Moreau gives more details about the part which the outlawed Duke of Suffolk and the exiled Constable took in the fighting. For portraits of La Trémouille and De la Palisse (Chabannes), see *Bibl. Nat. Estampes*, Q. b. 18.

counsellors and fighting men. Bayard had been wounded to the death in the retreat from Biagrasso, and the Loyal Servitor had watched his burial in the Monastère des Minimes, near Grenoble.

The good Queen Claude had died, too, at her château of Blois, leaving her three sons and two daughters to the care of Marguerite, the loving sister of the King, whose husband, D'Alençon, died of shame at his disgrace at Pavia. And now Francis began to fret himself into a mortal sickness behind his prison bars. All Europe began to feel some sympathy for his misfortunes—the sympathy of the Spanish ladies soon grew into a warmer feeling; but the captive King grew worse and worse, and the cold Emperor remained relentless. In alarm at what might happen, Marguerite set out for Spain. The keynote of her character is this passionate love for Francis, which acknowledged no fault, recognised no failing in her ideal hero. As she travels slowly southwards, when there is no one by to watch her tears, she consoles herself with writing down her gentle words of grief; the litter moves too slowly for her fears—

> "Une heure me dure cent ans
> Et me semble que ma litière
> Ne bouge ou retourne en arrière,
> Tant j'ai de m'avancer désir."

So, later on, will this patient "Madame Oiselle" write her *Heptameron*, as the litter swings through the pleasant roads of France while Brantôme's grandmother sits by, to amuse her brother in his last failing months of life. But at this time deliverance did not come from her, though she brought the King encouragement and health. Her letters to him after she had left Madrid to try and negotiate for his release [1] touchingly show how soon her hopes of success were to be disappointed. The Emperor was not a man to be influenced by her personality, or agree with her requests.[2] A useless proposal for abdication was all she could bring back to France.

After this, for a time, she is not prominent in politics. She married Henry, King of Navarre, who had escaped from his guards after Pavia, and had a daughter, the famous Jeanne d'Albret, who was to marry Antoine de Bourbon and be the

[1] See Lanz, *Correspondance de Charles V.*, p. 179. An account of her first interview with the Emperor at Toledo was read to the Parliament in Paris at the sitting of 19th October 1525. "Il me tint fort bons et honnêtes propos," she writes to Francis.

[2] Babou writes to Montmorency on 5th October of the second interview: "Là nous ont été tenus les plus hautes termes jusqu'aux menaces. Il leur a été répondu doucement." And Marguerite tells the King, "Je voyais bien qu'ils étaient empêchés de moi, me voulant rendre contente sans rien vouloir faire de la raison." And above: "Il y avait en eux peu d'honneur ou beaucoup de mauvais vouloir."

mother of Henry IV., le bon Béarnais, the witty husband of another Marguerite far different from this first one.

So in her quiet cultured Court at Nérac Marguerite of Navarre lives for these next years apart, laughing over the jests of Rabelais, talking with the Du Bellays of the Collège de France, thinking often over the more serious subjects of which she had written to her good friend the Bishop of Meaux during the first distresses of the war, and giving a refuge to Calvin and a helping hand to Estienne, busy over his Latin Bible.

At last the impatient royal prisoner was released, and galloped across the frontier to Bayonne, leaving his children in his stead as pledge for the extravagant promises which he had only made to break.

The country was sadly in need of guiding and of government, but Francis' first thought is to escape the serious tasks of business and the toil of State affairs, and to compensate himself for the imprisonment that had already undermined his strength, by fresh luxury and excitement among the ladies of his Court. One of the results of the negotiations for his release had been his engagement to Eleanor, sister of the Emperor, a woman of a pronouncedly German type, of great kindness

and little wit, with a dash of the romantic in her character that had shown itself in an early attachment to the Prince Palatine Frederic, her companion at the Court of Lorraine. Her features were strongly marked, and she had the true Austrian lip; for the rest, a pink and white face with black curved brows and smiling eyes.[1]

But this was not enough to content the roving Francis, in a Court where, as Brantôme tells us, "toute la décoration venait des dames." His first mistress was Françoise de Châteaubriand, of the famous house of Foix, but at Bayonne he remembered that it was quite ten years since she had first attracted him, and looking among his mother's maids of honour for some newer flame to stimulate his jaded senses, he lighted on the young Anne de Pisseleu. To see was to conquer, and Brantôme relates how he put off the old love and took on the new, apparently quite forgetting his betrothed Eleanor in the whole transaction.

Meanwhile very different scenes were going on in the unhappy towns of Italy. Bourbon had come back at the head of the imperial troops, joined by the ruffians who had been attached to Freundsberg. Don Pedro's men were in the north, the "bandes noires" of Jean de Médicis in the south, the

[1] *Vie du Palatin Frédéric*, Thomas de Liège.

Lorrainers in Naples, and town after town was ravaged and destroyed by freebooters, who had already swept the country, and left but little for the starving peasants.

With such a state of things in Italy, and such a man as Bourbon ready to dare anything in a despairing bid for fortune, a catastrophe was inevitable. He offered himself as the leader of this cut-throat rabble, and they received him with enthusiasm.[1]

A standard-bearer on the walls of Rome,[2] early in May 1527, suddenly saw some of Bourbon's soldiers and their chief himself advancing through the vines. His consternation betrayed a weak place in the defence. In a moment the whole of this infernal company are in motion pouring down upon the Eternal City from the hills behind the Vatican like vultures upon their prey. At the first alarm Benvenuto Cellini had caught up a musket like the rest, and running to the ramparts had the address, as he tells us himself, to pick off the leader with a shot in the groin.[3] The reckless exile was dead,

[1] One of their drinking songs ended—

"Calla, calla, Julio Cesar, Annibal y Scipion,
Viva la fama de Bourbon!"

[2] He was guarding "la muraille du bourg Saint Pierre."—Du Bellay.

[3] See *Life of Benvenuto Cellini*, by J. A. Symonds, vol. i. p. 91, and note.

and amid scenes which were a fitting ending to the last terrible months of his existence. The desperadoes behind him poured into Rome unchecked, and the most ghastly horrors of a sack began, that spared neither age nor sex, and desecrated sacred and profane alike. Where Goths and Vandals of an earlier age had feared to tread, these ruffians, the offscouring of the most brutal mercenary corps in Europe, burnt, pillaged, massacred, and gorged themselves with plunder until the plague broke out in the desolated city, and the soldiers had to fly for safety to the open country from the streets choked with the most hideous forms of death.[1]

At the same time there was terrible distress throughout France, for the heavily-taxed peasantry were shivering and half-starved in the provinces, while their "theatrical prince" was spending thousands on a thriftless Court. There is a great change in Francis on his return from Madrid. A beaten King, a King who publicly repudiates his promised word, can no longer pose as the champion of European chivalry; and even within his kingdom his prestige was waning. Lautrec was dead, Charles was once and for all established in

[1] Du Bellay gives a short account of the taking of Rome; but a terribly realistic picture of the scenes that followed will be found in the *Sack of Rome*, by Jacques Bonaparte (first part in Italian, at Cologne, 1756).

Italy and acknowledged as the most powerful prince in Europe, and in France the Reformation had already split up the Court into parties whose formation the King felt himself too weak to crush.

In September 1531 a welcome and unexpected sum of money came into the King's treasury. His mother, Louise de Savoie, died, leaving enough treasure for the King to complete the payment of his ransom and to begin the equipment of another army. He had probably never realised the extent of this woman's avarice and wickedness. The firmness and courage which she could occasionally show obscured faults to which even a son should not have been blind; and, if in nothing else, in her patronage of Du Prat was displayed the recklessness with which she could make use of the vilest instruments in the attainment of her ends.[1]

[1] She must have known the universal detestation in which her favourite was held. In the streets of Lyons people sang—

"Ort Chancellier, Dieu te maudye,
Desloyal traitre, conseiller;
Par toy le Roy est prisonnier
Dont tu perdras en bref la vye,
Ort Chancellier.
. . . . .
Tu feiz au Roy chasser Bourbon
Duquel le conseil estoit bon;
Il nuisoit à ta mengerye,
Ort Chancellier."

He had done so much evil that at last every misfortune was ascribed to him indiscriminately.

Just a year before, Francis had made a real step in the right direction by beginning a sound political combination against Charles V. He had several sympathies with the English King Henry, and they could agree at least in a common mistrust and dislike of the crafty character of the Emperor, so different from their own.

The mutual promises of the Field of the Cloth of Gold were renewed upon a firmer basis, in an interview near the same place twelve years later, and the Protestant princes who had just formed the League of Smalkald were quite prepared to join the two princes against Charles. But Francis, blind as ever to the true issues of a consistent policy, and always prone to let his passion for Italy prove a besetting snare, betrothed his second son to Catherine, the last of the house of the famous Cosmo de Medicis. It was an utterly disproportionate match, that appealed to the pride of Clement VII. without in the least affecting the position of the French in Italy, for the Pope died in the next year; it was of serious harm to the Protestant alliance, and even caused the grave annoyance of the English King, whose part in the bargain was never accomplished to his mind; its consequences in the future were still more fatal, for it introduced into the heart of France the poisonous influence of a woman who was to become

its Queen and to continue her fatal plots and machinations until the end of the century.

Meanwhile the power of Charles was growing fast. As the conqueror of Barbarossa he was almost the champion of Christendom, while he could point to France as the ally of Soliman and the heretics. His contempt at last openly broke out in the extraordinary speech, which Du Bellay has reported, before the Pope in the Consistory. His attack upon the south of France was only warded off by the brutal methods of Montmorency, who laid waste the whole of Provence to compel the Imperialists to retire for lack of food.

The Protestants were growing desperate of help. Already Geneva, in 1536, began to be troubled with insurrections, and the Eidgenossen of the Huguenots were forming with the watchwords of their teacher Calvin. The King himself had openly given up all pretence of championing their cause, and joined the Spanish party of Montmorency and the Dauphin. A strange result of this changed policy was the visit of the Emperor to France—we shall hear of him at Amboise and elsewhere—but it ended in nothing better than the disgrace of the Constable when the futility of all attempts at reconciliation became evident after Charles had returned.

A third war began, in which the only profits were

won by the Turks, who sailed with their booty to Constantinople. Cerissoles and the victories of Montluc were barren of results except for the rise in importance of the Guises, who were to play so large a part in the next half-century. The reign of Francis was drawing to its close. In 1545 died Luther, and in 1547 the English King, in whose death Francis saw a warning of his own; both he and the Emperor were growing old before their time, but the French King was to go before his rival; and Francis was one of those men who can ill afford to grow old. The gaiety of his youthful temperament was turned to a morose irritability, the bloom of his first beauty was changed by the disfigurements of disease. Amid the quarrels of his mistresses, the disputes of his old friends, with all his grief for the death of his eldest son, and his annoyance at the attitude of the Dauphin, who between his Italian wife and the cold counsels of Diane de Poitiers seemed completely estranged from the sympathy of his father, Francis feverishly wore out the last days of his existence: some solace, some consolation, indeed, was given him by the presence of his sister Marguerite, who tries tenderly to amuse him at Chambord with her conversation, to write him stories in her *Heptameron;* but he cannot rest. He hurries through Touraine from one hunting-

seat to another, striving to forget his pain of body and distress of mind in violent exercise, but must needs stop at last for very agony at Rambouillet, and there die.

In spite of all his faults and failures Francis has always exercised a strange fascination over his countrymen. "If he was not a great King," writes one, "he was at any rate a great man." "Regulus, it is true, was more virtuous," says another; "let men like Regulus condemn him." Brantôme and Du Bellay are full of his praises, and they have been echoed by their compatriots ever since. And perhaps this is because he is so distinctively a type of one side of the French character. "François, ici présent, qui est tout Français," as Thomas Birco calls him at the Estates of Tours which confirmed his marriage with the daughter of Louis XII.: something, too, of the lustre of the changeful times he lived in has fallen upon him, and lent to the King the fame of a Renaissance that came but from the progress of the ages.

In the reign of Francis the effect of many great discoveries first began to be felt. The discovery of America had created a revolution in commerce, had cheapened the precious metals, had created capitalists; the route round the Cape of Good Hope had enlarged the boundaries of trade; the wars across

the Alps had led men's minds to Italy, that old enchantress with "the fatal gift of beauty" even in the years of her decay, and with an added interest from the stores of classical research just opened to the world of scholarship and thought. Italy was the soil of heroes, where the chivalry of a later day was to try its maiden steel amid the new and changing scenes of European politics, where Bayard met in fight the sons of Cortes and Pizarro, who had seen the fall of Mexico and Peru, where Michael Angelo was striving, alone and unassisted, to show an unheeding generation the warnings of this world and the next.

Among all this comes the great change, the mighty movement of the Reformation, the beginning of modern times; a movement which awakened old notions of equality, for it began among the poor and ignorant, which changed a military society into one civil and industrial, which, like Socrates, brought ideas into the world and taught the liberty of philosophical opinion in the face of an irresistable political despotism.

And it is with this intellectual part of the movement of reform that Marguerite of Navarre is especially associated, though she had been obliged to hide her sympathies from her brother; and now that he was dead the light seemed to have gone out

of her life. Her oldest friends had left her or were dead, and in her contemplative seclusion at Nérac she quietly and sadly lived her last years, conversing with Montluc, Bishop of Valence, with Lefebvre d'Étable, librarian of Blois, writing to Amyot, the professor of the university at Bourges, or exchanging graceful fancies with her poet Marot. "Hers was a mind," says Michelet, "delicate, swift, subtle, which fluttered over everything, lighted on everything, and scarcely went beneath the surface." And Rabelais, too, with a keen appreciation of her character, writes in his dedication—

> "Esprit abstrait ravy et ecstatic,
> Qui frequentait les cieux son origine."

And her love for Francis is the sun she follows, "non inferiora secutus." This pale princess is his good genius among the evil influences of a Court of favourites where there was none like Agnes Sorel; when he deserted her, he left his fortune with her. "Earth had conquered heaven."

The quaint stories she has left in literature, with the delightful interludes of conversation that are their chief charm, have all the indecency but little of the immorality of their time. To fully grasp what that immorality was we have but to look at the extraordinary Memoirs of Cellini, the type of

the strange age in which he lived, who seems to have lost all discrimination between wrong and right, to be devoid of any moral sense, wholly given up to the physical pleasures of a life as full as he could make it, or to the keen passion for the beautiful in art, of which he was so great a master. One more thing, that is but another reflection of the temper of the times, is very noticeable in this autobiography: there is a great contempt for human life, a hideous familiarity with death that shows itself again and again in what that century has left for us to see and pity. The woodcuts of Hans-Sebald Beham are full of the "faucheurs de la mort," the terrible skeletons in tatters that follow hard upon the plundering lansquenets. At Lyons men were studying Holbein's "simulachres de la mort," those wild imaginations of ever-present death, where the grinning skull shows close behind the Pope's tiara, where a skeleton upon the battle-field smites down the soldier with a human bone, or in the doctor's study takes the fees from his last patient, or with the ghastly music of his bagpipes lures on the maniac to destruction.

. . . "Comme sur un drap noir,
Sur la tristesse immense et sombre
Le blanc squelette se fait voir . . .
. . . Des cercueils lève le couvercle

Avec ses bras aux os pointus,
Dessine ses côtes en cercle
Et rit de son large rictus."

There is a fragment in the Museum of Namur, a mailed knight to the waist without a head, holding in its hands a skull; beneath is the inscription, " Une heure viendra quy tout paiera," and the letters N and P joined by a true lovers' knot. It is a fragment that shows pathetically the terror, the injustice, the wild dreams of vengeance of those times, when no man's life or woman's virtue was safe, when the inevitable sadness of the grave was redoubled by strange shapes of death personified and hideously exultant.

In this sombre picture the form of Marguerite stands apart, a light that was soon to fade. Her death at the Castle of Odos in December 1549 was one more triumph for the party that had always been in opposition to her and to her instincts. The sun had set, and " the pale crescent of Diana " began its slow and sure ascent, chilling with its cold beams the reign of Henry II.

Diane de Poitiers, Duchesse de Valentinois, is enthroned at Chenonceaux.

Chenonceaux

CHAPTER XII

CHENONCEAUX

"Lors se bastissoyt aux soings de Messire Bohier, général des finances, le chasteau de Chenonceaulx, lequel, par magnardise et curiosité boutoyt son bastiment à cheval sur la rivière du Cher."

"There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt. But those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a son and there is nothing in his hand."

Among the first acts of the new King after the death of Francis I. was the gift of the royal domain of Chenonceaux to Diane de Poitiers, with whose name the château has ever since been associated. But, though it is in the Italian gardens of Diana that the story of Chenonceaux touches its highest point of interest, this, the most lovely of the "plus excellents bastiments de France," has seen a long line of châtelaines. Ladies ruled there even before Diana, and the last have but lately left this home among the naiads of the Cher, which seemed especially dedicated to the grace and luxury of women.

Some distance eastward of the bridge of Tours,

between the rivers of the Loire and Indre, nestles the little village of Chenonceaux, in the shade of the great forest of Amboise. The railway, which soon leaves the valley of the Loire, had entered the vale of the Cher, and passed the main drive of the château before we had realised the situation; and in a few moments an omnibus, drawn at an astonishing pace by one of those French horses of the Percheron breed which never seem to tire and are rarely out of condition, brought us to the inn of the Bon Laboureur in the village, where a primitive but extremely well-cooked déjeuner awaited us.

We had caught a glimpse of the roof of the château, broken by its countless points and gables, as we drove up, and as soon as the bottle of Vin Mousseux [1] was finished and appreciated we were fairly on our way to explore more closely the home of so many beauties famous in French history.

The fine drive to the doors is guarded by two stone sphinxes, and, though the railway crosses it, it is at a distance which obviates any annoyance from the sleepy and infrequent trains.

The first view of Chenonceaux is a magnificent one. On the immediate right is the long range of

[1] "Vouvray (sec) Bismarck" is the best brand, which can be bought at Rochecorbon, slightly liqueured or not, in the wood.

splendid stables—a modern building, but of good taste; and to the left spreads the wide terraced garden built by Diane de Poitiers, surrounded by its high walk which leads to the raised courtyard immediately in front of the main building, a large and very handsome open space rising upon high walls from the lower level, with a fine detached tower at the right corner, the oldest part of the château, the last relic of its earliest owners. It bears the initials of Thomas Bohier and Catherine Briçonnet his wife, upon the beautifully carved doorway at its base, and is crowned by a huge extinguisher of slate, while the lines of its sides are gracefully relieved by a smaller turret clinging to its walls, whose pointed top breaks the outline of the larger roof. Immediately to the left of this is the great drawbridge leading to a strong circular stone pier rising out of the waters of the Cher; then begins the main building of the château, that fairy-like construction which owed its birth to Catherine Briçonnet.

In early times a Roman villa seems to have stood upon this site, too lovely to be left long without an occupant. The vine-lands slope down softly to the river's edge, and the trees and foliage round the water help to make an exquisite natural setting for one of the most beautiful dwellings ever fashioned by the art of man. Later on the site was

filled by a rough kind of feudal castle, to which, in the time of the Marques (between 1250 and 1500), a watermill had been added.

Jean Marques had sided with the English against the son of Charles VI., and by his traitorous adherence to the invaders caused so much annoyance that the town of Tours summoned Du Guesclin to come to the assistance of the province. Close by the castle he defeated the English, razed the fortifications of the place, and cut down its woods "à l'hauteur de l'infamie," as a punishment for the unpatriotic behaviour of their owner. In 1432 a second Jean got letters-patent from Charles VII. for raising the outworks again, and rebuilding the donjon, and in the next year the moats were dug and the corner tower built. Jean died in 1460, heavily in debt, and Pierre, with an equal disregard of the first principles of finance, bought land and built on it until the family was ruined and the estate heavily mortgaged.

Such was the state of Chenonceaux when Catherine Briçonnet came to transform it. The feudal castles were gradually decaying, and the power of the Bourgeois that rose with the rising of the Renaissance was represented by her husband, Thomas Bohier. The main buildings of the older pile she entirely demolished, except the one tower

which still stands in the corner of the raised court-yard before the main door of the château. The building—call it villa, castle, château, what you will —was at any rate no longer to be a fortress, and indeed there had never been much serious fighting (if we except the operations under Bertrand du Guesclin long before) round a home which was destined for all its future to be almost the only great château in France without the stain of murder on its walls.

In the improvements which this first Catherine initiated, the old piles and massive masonry of the mill were cleverly made use of, and upon this solid base, made somewhat larger, the main body of Chenonceaux was built with a taste so exquisite and so original that the uncertainty which hides the name of the architect is doubly to be deplored. Mrs. Mark Pattison, whose notes on the architecture of Touraine gracefully supply so much that is wanting in the more serious treatises of Viollet le Duc or Petit, considers that the plans of Chenonceaux may be ascribed to the same Pierre le Nepveu dit Trinqueau who is responsible later on for the gigantic courts of Chambord: if so, the earlier building gains immensely from the greater restraint and refinement of the artist's handling, while it loses nothing of that wild spirit of invention which is the

characteristic of a transitional period in which men feel their way towards constructive change, "not daring to touch essential features, but tentatively busy on the transformations and adaptations of minor details."

The Renaissance had a far earlier origin in France than is usually given to it; the definite fixing of any limits to a period of change is always dangerous, often impossible. By the time the English had been expelled the old defensive architecture was known to be practically useless, and the transition, which is especially noticeable at Loches, had already begun. In the same line of building the narrow openings for arrow-shots and the unbroken line of thick protecting wall had given place to rooms that opened to the light, with windows carved and arabesqued. What was needed was not the foreign arts of Primaticcio,[1] but a firm national government at home, which was ensured by peace and signalised by the rise of the master masons and the builders of the great cathedrals.

There were many pilgrimages to the Holy Sepulchre before the first Crusade, and so it was because the fifteenth century dreamed of Italy that the sixteenth went there, and found instead of free

[1] See the article on Chenonceaux, by M. James Darmesteter, *Revue Bleue.*

development the bondage that ensued from fuller knowledge. But of this first pure dream, this earlier time of reawakening and national strength [1] unfettered by Italian schools, Azay-le-Rideau and Chenonceaux remain among the most perfect examples.

"Tourelles break out from the massive walls at points where they cease to suggest the flanking towers which they originally replaced. Every turret, every pinnacle, is crowned with some fantastic ornament, and the angles at which gables jut forth here and there from the pierced and carved work which surrounds them, are selected with the express intention of misleading the eye; but the heavy cones which surmount the larger towers thrust through the ornaments which flame about them, and bring a sense of order into troubled places, even where every element of design seems absent." [2]

Nor is the interior less remarkable with halls and corridors and antechambers multiplying mysteriously. The contrast between the rooms of

[1] See Chap. VI. on the House of Orleans, the earlier pages on the art of Touraine.

[2] Mrs. Mark Pattison, *Renaissance of Art in France*, cap. ii. Chenonceaux was complete (all save the bridge across the Cher) by 1517. The wing of Francis I. at Blois was being built in 1515, Chambord and Azay about 1526, Fontainebleau in the next year.

Langeais and of Chaumont becomes a still greater one here; the few high halls that sufficed for Jean Bourré at Langeais would never have satisfied the enlarged ideas of a life apart as well as a life in common, for which the architect of Chenonceaux was bidden to provide.

With many of Thomas Bohier's relations we have already become acquainted. He was, for instance, a connection of the Chancellor Du Prat, a son-in-law of Cardinal Briçonnet, a nephew of Jacques de Beaune Semblançay, and he held the post of General of the Finances in Normandy; he was one of the great financiers who were in many ways the precursors of the famous and unhappy Fouquet, but as our sympathies are often more in favour of the magnificent good taste of the minister of Louis XIV. than against the recklessness of his expenditure, so if these earlier "surintendants" greatly sinned they left the beauty of their châteaux as an enduring excuse for their shortcomings.

For some time Semblançay had been buying lands for Bohier all round the embarrassed estates of the Marques family, who, after much struggling to keep their old home, were finally bought out in 1499 with certain legal restrictions and feudal complications still unsettled. For seven years more Bohier continued to buy up land in all directions,

until at last he was able to become the sole possessor of Chenonceaux, bidding against the "grand maître des arbalétriers de France." But the Crown had something to say in the acquisition of this coveted estate, and Bohier, after spending 26,812 livres on the place, was made to pay further sums as compensation for taking up certain royal privileges; but more and more land on all sides was bought up, and the reconstruction of the château was begun, of which Bohier himself was never to see the completion. His position at this time gave him immense power and control over the revenues of the kingdom, and his proud motto, "S'il vient à point me souviendra," seemed almost justified, when in 1521 he went with Lautrec as Treasurer-General on the Italian expedition. In the affair of the loss of the King's money already explained, Bohier paid the soldiers out of his own pocket, and was made Lieutenant-General. He died in 1524, at Vigelli, in the same retreat in which Bayard perished, and his uncle Semblançay, at the age of eighty-two, was hanged at Montfaucon to save the tarnished honour of Louise de Savoie.

The magnificent preparations of Chenonceaux had a sad ending enough. Perhaps it would have been possible for a scion of a royal house only, or an official in such high position as that of Thomas

Bohier, to have done what he did for his château; but whether his immense wealth was all got honestly or not, he seems to have left but little comfort behind him, for Catherine Briçonnet died but two years afterwards, and his son's days were early embittered by the harassing task of trying to square the confused accounts of his father. The rest of Antoine's life was made up of financial quibbles and questionable arrangements, which throw a strange light on the business honesty of the times, and explain much of the after history of Chenonceaux.[1]

The heir of Thomas Bohier's complicated balance-sheets was given all his father's offices as well, with the unpleasant result that in 1531 he was declared a debtor for an enormous sum to the Treasury. Antoine at once made arrangements with his brothers to amalgamate their common property, and, by adding Chenonceaux itself to the money he was thus enabled to raise, he found it possible to

[1] De Tocqueville explains very forcibly the distressing position of these "Surintendants de Finance," who from Marigny to Necker were between the devil and the deep sea. "La produit des taxes si mal reparties avait des limites, et les besoins des princes n'en avaient plus. Cependant ils ne voulaient ni convoquer les états pour en obtenir les subsides, ni provoquer la noblesse en l'imposant à réclamer la convocation de ces assemblées. De là vient cette prodigieuse et malfaisante fécondité de l'esprit financier durant les trois derniers siècles de la monarchie." The "two daughters of the horseleach" left these unlucky officials little rest.

satisfy the demands of Anne de Montmorency, the creditor for the Crown. He was forgiven the rest by Francis I., "en bonne foi et parole de roi," and for the present seemed quit of the whole unpleasant business. Chenonceaux had become a Crown domain, and a series of royal visits soon began.

Now Francis often came over from his Court at Plessis-lez-Tours, with Eleanor of Austria or the Duchesse d'Étampes, and loitering behind the hunting party rode the young Dauphin talking to the ever-juvenile Diana. The glimpses of gaiety which came ever and again to Chenonceaux during this reign, after the death of Francis grew in good earnest into that splendour and magnificence of which they were but the promise, and which never left it till the death of Catherine de Medicis. As the favourite of the King, the triumphant Diane de Poitiers was given outright that estate which she had no doubt coveted long before on the hunting excursions from Plessis-lez-Tours. The pretext of the gift consisted in the valuable services rendered to the State by her husband Louis de Brézé, Grand Seneschal of Normandy, services which it had remained for Henry II. to discover and reward. She was given all rights implied in the domain, and at Paris, at Tours, and at Amboise the deeds of gift were signed and countersigned.

But Diana did not yet feel safe. At the very outset of our acquaintance with her we shall find her fair fame tarnished with the intrigues and chicanery of a lawsuit, which had for its sole object the possession of a firm and inalienable right to the lands of Chenonceaux, to oppose to the inevitable objections of the envious Queen. Nor does this trait in her character appear fortuitously; to the very end Diana appears cold and hard. In the great famine of 1557 she gave no alms away to her starving tenants. Throughout her life she grasped at every chance of riches and preferment, and let very little slip.

This strange process now began. The inalienability of Crown property being still a question of some uncertainty, Diana determined to go back to the crisis of the unhappy Antoine Bohier's fate, the 28th of May 1535, to say that his calculations had been grossly exaggerated, and to completely annul the contract which had received the formal assent of the last King. But this was not all: the ill-used Bohier was then to be reinstated in a sarcastic mockery of ownership, and the balance of his old debt rigorously demanded; he would then inevitably be declared bankrupt, his lands put up for auction, all other bidders, even the Seigneur de Rochecorbon, conquered by the invincible favourite, and Diana

should at last become the legal owner with incontestable rights. All this was done: the wretched General of Finances was crushed in every court of law, and though a gentleman of the Royal Chamber, a Privy Councillor, and Lieutenant-General of Touraine, he was obliged to fly to Venice; the curse of his high office was upon him. Of the twelve men who had held this post since Marigny in 1315, eight had died violent deaths, three had been ruined, Florimond Robertet alone under Charles VIII. and Louis XII. had been unmolested and died quietly. Nor did the history of Bohier's own family contain much that was encouraging: Semblançay had been sacrificed, his wife's uncle, Jean Poucher, had been unjustly hanged; his cousin Gilles Berthelot, had been exiled, and Azay-le-Rideau suffered the same fate as Chenonceaux.[1]

So Antoine Bohier fled, seeing no other alter-

[1] The covetous and grasping Louise de Savoie was peculiarly hostile to the financiers. In the first years of her son's reign she writes: "Sans y pouvoir donner provision, mon fils et moi feusmes continuellement desrobés par les gens de finances;" and again, in 1518, "en Novembre le moine rouge, Anthoine Boys (Cardinal Bohier), parent de nostre reverendissime chancelier et des inextricables sacrificateurs de finances, alla de repos en travail hors de ce monde; et lors fut faict une fricassée d'abbayes, selon la folle ambition de plusieurs papes."

native, but the parody of justice went on, adhering with a rigorous irony to all its forms. He let all its judgments go against him by default, until Diana had finally secured her Naboth's vineyard at (it is pleasing to notice) a considerably heightened price, until his famous balance had been for the second time forgiven, and he could return bearing with him the mockery of a forced approval and a heavy heart to begin life afresh.

While the new proprietress is arranging with De l'Orme [1] the plans of her new bridge across the Cher, is building her Italian gardens (to which every famous gardener in Touraine contributes), and planting her labyrinth within her park, we must take our stand, too, among the crowds of busy workmen by the river, and watch more closely the face that had so great an influence over Henry II. and the destinies of France.

It is a pale, untroubled face, with waving bands of raven hair above a brow of brilliant white, a face that will not easily grow old, for it has never suffered from emotion, that has outshone the painted countenances of all other beauties at the Court by

[1] It is certain that De l'Orme was at Chenonceaux in 1556 at any rate. He was disgraced three years afterwards, and in 1565 appeared his *Livre d'Architecture*, some time before Du Cerceau's more famous account of the *Plus Excellents Bastiments de France*.

the use of no other drugs than indifference and cold water.[1]

Diana, born in 1499, was the daughter of Saint Vallier, whose plots with the Constable had been punished by imprisonment at Loches. At fifteen she married Louis de Brézé, Seneschal of Normandy, the grandson of a traitor, and the son of a descendant of Agnes Sorel who murdered his adulterous wife.

For fifteen years the heat of the Rhone blood within her veins was tempered by her life in Normandy among the lawsuits and processes of her husband; her only appearance in the larger world was in connection with Saint Vallier's release, for the story of her amours with Francis I. was the invention of a scandalous Court and nothing more.[2] She remained unheard of till her husband's death,

[1] See Brantôme (ii. 395), who saw her in her old age, "aussy belle de face, aussy fraische, aussy aymable comme à l'aage de trente ans."

[2] The details of her father's trial show this. See also Coignet, *Un Gentilhomme des Temps Passés,* cap. v., and Clement Marot's verses—

"Que voulez vous, Diane bonne,
Que vous donne ?
Vous n'eustes, comme j'entends,
Jamais tant d'heur en printemps
Qu'en automne."

Whether she knowingly aimed at the rising and left the setting sun is uncertain—she was quite clever enough to do so.

and then came quietly to Court with her two girls to marry, and the reputation of an impregnable widow. She consequently secured the highest prize of all; for Francis, half ashamed of the dull nature of his son, whose youthful spirits had been somewhat crushed and clouded in Spanish prisons, had laughingly recommended this sombre Dauphin to the good graces of the handsome Seneschale, who was to teach him courtly manners and a becoming affection for the Italian wife whom he had for so long neglected. And Madame Diane was keen enough to see the way to stir the sluggish spirit and undeveloped passions of the prince, who amid the gallantries of his father's idle Court had grown up uncared for and neglected.

"Though somewhat of a melancholic temper," says the ambassador Marino dei Cavalli, "he is yet very skilful in all arms and exercises; though slow of speech his thoughts are clear and his opinions sound; his mind has ripened slowly like the fruits of autumn." Thus it was that the Italian airs and graces of his young foreign wife had not appealed to him, but his slow heart opened out and gave itself irrevocably to the maturer charms of Diana in the pure black and white of modest widowhood.

Her strength, her magnificent health, the cold

resolve and energy of her character, appealed to him as much as the firm line of her features, the proud curve of her lip, the narrow forehead which marked the decision of her nature rather than the loftiness of her ideas.[1] There was no sensuality, no tenderness in this face, nothing but the visible expression of strength of will and action, the serenity half divine that Goujon was to express in the exquisite lines of his " Diane Chasseresse " at Anet.

So calm and so impassive a divinity would already leave something to be desired by most men, but for a later age, that judges of her actions after the confusing magic of her countenance has passed away, there is a more serious defect. This woman who, by the very repression of her soul, kept firmer hold upon the stern régime that gave imperishable health and beauty to her body, was disfigured by a very demon of avarice and intrigue insatiable.[2]

[1] See the portrait in the library at Aix, with the lines in Francis' handwriting, " Bele à la veoir, Oneste à la anter." There is another drawing in crayon in the Niel collection, a medal (in the Bibl. Nat.) with the legend, " Omnium victorem vici," and the statue at Versailles. These are without doubt authentic, and, as nearly as may be, contemporary. Many others of uncertain origin are at Rouen, at Chenonceaux, at Chaumont, at Azay-le-Rideau, at Hampton Court. See M. Guiffrey, *Lettres inédites de D. de P.*

[2] " Grande véritablement," says Michelet, " énormément capace, miraculeusement absorbante. La baleine, le léviathan sont de faibles images."

She took Anet, she took Chenonceaux, she took the Duchy of Valentinois, she laid hands on the very treasury of the new reign and kept the key. She had, it is true, inspired the delicate and artificial masterpieces of her time,[1] but her stately influence had chilled the impetuous spirit of the Renaissance; her nature is more reflected in the squares and spaces of the Italian garden than in the wild flourishes of the turreted roof of Chenonceaux. Similarly, there is a cool calculation about her first entry into Court; the waves of scandal, even the outbursts of the astonished King, break unheeded against the stony rock of her indifference. She quietly and surely makes her way into the very depths of the Dauphin's affections, marries her daughters into the powerful families of Lamarck and Guise, and with yet more astounding subtlety of penetration wards off the possible opposition of Catherine de Medicis, by actually reconciling her disdainful husband to her presence, encouraging the backward Henry in his duties, and even watch-

[1] See the picture, belonging to the school of Clouet, from which in 1879 six copies were taken—of which there is one in Bibl. Nat. Gal. des Estampes. It is apparently of Diana in old age, still with the same *tight*, pale features. It adds a sinister association to the title of Valentinois, that the most famous holder of it in recent times had been the handsome and unscrupulous Italian, Cæsar Borgia.

ing over the sickbed of the mother and the cradles of her children. Her liaison with Henry [1] was not to be reproached with jealousy at any rate, for she had recognised only too keenly the necessities of her own position, and of the politics of the time: the only two friendships which the Dauphin had permitted himself before Diana had appeared were with Montmorency and with his brilliant playfellow, Saint André: both were very shortly firm friends of Diana.[2] In the last years of Francis, distracted as we have seen by the strife of parties and intrigues, the party of Diana was the strongest, the

[1] To the very end she persisted in representing it as nothing more than a Platonic friendship.

[2] In the Bibl. Nat. Man. fr. 3021, fo. 94, and 3139, fo. 63, are two letters from Diana to the Constable—in the first of which occurs the regular treaty of alliance between them. "Assurez vous Monsyeur," she writes, "que sy vous voulez ainsy user en mon endroit, comme me mandez, je vous seray sure et obeyssante comme personne au monde."

It is interesting to note how two such different characters were united by their common interests; yet the sombre faith of the Constable, with his terrible "paternosters" interspersed with sudden orders for a hanging or a quartering forthwith, was not so very different in its results from the mocking cynicism with which Diana suppressed her own religious convictions, and refused to listen to her conscience. Dumas is probably right in hinting that there was an even closer tie between the pair than mere political alliance; yet it is hardly intelligible that the King could have had a serious rival in this brutal soldier who had as little good fortune when a general as he had good manners when a courtier.

party that was coming to the throne, and her influence over the new King became the more invincible that from her skill and tact it was almost unfelt.[1]

The reign of Henry II. began, as it ended, with a tournament. The transition between the times of Francis to the new society of the last Valois was signalised by a reversion to the older world which settled its differences in the trial by combat. This strange scene of the duel between Jarnac and Châtaigneraie, sanctioned by the King himself, and watched by a multitude besides, has been often described; for the details, which are interesting

[1] Unfortunately we have none of Diana's letters to the King, to explain in part the magic of her influence over him—several of his still exist. Bibl. Nat. Man. fr. 3143, fos. 2, 3, 4, 5. "Madame mamye, je vous remercye très humblement de la peyne que vous avez prise de me mander de vos nouvelles, quy est la chose du monde que je tiens la plus agréable, et vous supplye de me tenir promesse, car je ne puis vivre sans vous, et sy vous saviez le peu de passetams que j'ay vous auriez pityé de moy. Je ne feré plus longue lectre, sinon pour vous asseurer que ne sçauriez sitost venir que le souhaite celuy qui demeure à jamés vostre très humble serviteur."

The letter is signed with the ⊟⊟ which so often recurs in the decorations of Chenonceaux; the cipher did as well for H and D as for the initials of Henry and his Queen Catherine. By the kindness of the Crédit Foncier, and of M. le Breton at Tours, I have been able to reproduce in this volume one of the rare examples of Diana's handwriting which exist, from one of the MSS. in the Archives of Chenonceaux; as was probable, it is a receipt.

enough, we must refer the curious reader to the "procès verbal" of the duel.[1] The gist of the whole sad matter is put shortly in the pages of Vieilleville, and we have but time in this place to look quickly at the crowded lists for some indication of the spirit of the times we have to deal with. The quarrel had arisen on the misunderstanding of a word between the gallants of the Court that might have been at once explained away but for the bitterness of party spirit in the last years of the reign of Francis I.; and now a "whole infinity of people from Paris, scholars, artisans, and vagabonds," had come to St. Germain en Laye to see the fight and discuss the chances of the champions. Châtaigneraie, thick-set and strong, with a large suite of followers behind him, the chosen gallants of that company of noble youths whom the King showed so proudly to the Venetian ambassador, with a gorgeous display of liveries and arms and banners, even a great tent spread with dainties for the anticipated victory, and crowded with plate borrowed from half the noble houses in Paris—Châtaigneraie seemed more than a match for the tall, thin, slightly-made Sieur de Jarnac, who had spent so long a time in the vulgar operations of making his will, committing

[1] Bibl. Nat. Estampes, *Hist. de France,* reg. Q. b. 19. For Michelet's account see *Macmillan's Magazine,* No. 374, p. 130.

his soul to God, and taking lessons from an Italian fencing-master.

To the sound of many trumpets the King appeared in the balcony above,[1] his face, naturally clouded, somewhat troubled with the thought of the risks his favourite was to run. Beside him are Diana and a brilliant suite of ladies in their Court costumes. But a long and wearying delay ensued, while the formal preliminaries were gone through. At last the combatants advance, and with one swift, sure stroke the famous "coup de Jarnac" has succeeded, and Châtaigneraie the boastful lies bleeding, with his leg half severed, on the ground. The King reluctantly approved the victory and moved sullenly back to the house of Baptiste Gondy nearer Paris. But all was not yet over. The crowd, angered already at their long wait, hungry, too, so far away from the good inns of Paris, and with half-understood feelings of resentment at the unfair attitude of the King and the haughtiness of the Court which had been thus unwittingly put on its trial, broke unrestrainedly through the fenced arena and sacked Châtaigneraie's tent. They pocketed the plate, they ate the delicacies raw, they trampled

[1] A miniature in the "Cérémonie des Gages de Bataille," a MS. in the Bibl. Nat., gives many details of a judicial combat such as this.

down the finery and furniture, and at last, not without sound scuffles with the archers of the guard, tramped back to Paris in the evening with no good opinion of the blessings of the opening reign. "Ainsi passe la gloire du monde qui trompe toujours son maitre," moralises Vieilleville, "principalement quand on entreprend quelque chose contre le droit et l'équité."

The keynote of Henry II.'s character and of the years that were to come was struck with no uncertain sound. The France that had vigour enough to rise almost unharmed from the extravagances, the mistakes, the wars of Francis I., was crushed by the desperate folly of his son, by the gambling spirit of adventure which was the one alternative to the excesses of party struggle, by the fatal negligence and misgovernment which were responsible for the horrors of the Civil War and the unspeakable decay amidst which the last of the Valois was assassinated.

The reign of Henry II. never reached the dignity of a settled government. To the end it remained a bitter strife of parties, of Montmorencys against Guises or Châtillons. Guided by uncertain leaders, whose aims were for their own advancement, never for their country's, France looked for help where

none was to be found, to Italy [1] and Scotland. In Scotland the Guises were already strong, and carried out their policy by the marriage of their niece, Marie Stuart, to the Dauphin; England was alternately flattered by Catholic alliances and disturbed by connivance with Protestant conspiracies, until in the reign of Elizabeth it was made definitely hostile by the tampering of the Guises with Scotland; and for this Marie Stuart was to pay the penalty.

Within the kingdom the energies that should have been applied to State affairs were consumed in opposition to the power of Diana, and in the counter-moves of her supporters. Catherine attacked the situation with her characteristic methods. A fête was got up at St. Germain with Marie Stuart to adorn it, and a certain Miss Fleming whose fresh beauty served to attract the King for a season from the duchess; but the youthful Scotchwoman was no match for the widow, and fresh measures soon became necessary. The Cardinal de Lorraine was at this time filling the rôle of Georges d'Amboise and Briçonnet, and a fresh conquest of Italy was attempted by way of diversion, but it failed as usual,

[1] The siege of Sienna and the heroism of its defenders are described in the *Mémoires* of Montluc, who put off saying "ce méchant et vilain mot Je la rends" to the very last extremity. See also the account of the floods in Italy in 1558, and the antiquities laid bare by them, in François de Rabutin.

and the Cardinal only succeeded in making an enemy of his ancient benefactress, Diana, who was strong in the support of Montmorency the Constable. Yet another mistress was produced to tempt the heart of royalty to fresh distractions, one Nicole de Versigny, who was to reproduce in later generations the intrigues and chicanery of Henry's Court, in the person of that Jeanne de Saint Remy who should give such unpleasant notoriety to a landholder in Touraine, " the mud volcano " Cardinal de Rohan, the unwilling hero of the diamond necklace.

But more serious events occurred at last, and with them appeared the one pure figure in this shameful age, the Admiral Coligny, whose life is one long censure of the shams and debauchery of his contemporaries. At St. Quentin he was sacrificed by the mismanagement of Montmorency,[1] and the triumph of the Guises was still further assured by the taking of Calais from the English.

" It was time for the party of Reform to fight or die; " the party that fought for Shakespeare and for Bacon, for Rembrandt and Spinosa, for Descartes in France; the party which had already taken a firm hold on the intellectual sympathies of the nation,

[1] See the account of the siege in François de Rabutin, who also describes the taking of Calais.

and which had already seen the blood of the first martyrs to its faith.[1] With the whole extent of this movement it is impossible to deal here, except in the cases where its results and its chief lessons are prominently brought before our eyes, as they are at Amboise and Blois. The horrors that were to come[2] were foreshadowed in the terrible scenes behind the Sorbonne in 1557, in the inquisitorial power given to the Cardinal de Lorraine; and in the Edict of Ecouen. Diana, with the King at her

[1] See the *Journal* of Louise de Savoie, 26th Sept. 1522. "Pierre Piefort . . . fut bruslé tout vif, après que, dans le donjon du chasteau il eut eu la main coupée, pour ce que impiteusement il avoit pris le corpus Domini, et la custode qui estoit en la chapelle." These early outbreaks of the Reformers excite less sympathy than their later sufferings. Francis I. was much troubled by their disorderly proceedings in Paris. But the movement to which they first gave organised expression had already attracted a certain amount of notice in high places (though not with any appreciation of their strength and meaning; see the chapter on the Conspiracy of Amboise). In December of the same year Louise writes: "Mon fils et moi par la grace du Saint Esprit commençasmes à cognoistre les hypocrites blancs, noirs, gris, enfumés, et de toutes couleurs, desquels Dieu par sa clémence et bonté infinie, nous veuille préserver et deffendre."

[2] For accounts of the movement by contemporary writers see Pierre de la Place, *État de la Religion et de la Republique*, also D'Aubigné's *Martyrologie*, and the writings of the Bourgeois de Paris, in MS. in the Bibl. Nat., fonds du Puy, No. 742, from 1515 to 1536, and published by M. Lalaune.

It is a simple and exact enumeration of facts without much comment, like the earlier Journal of the reigns of Charles VI. and Charles VII.

side, had already seen the shrieking Protestants raised half-consumed out of the flames to be continually lowered into them again until the human cinder ceased to palpitate.

But of all of this Chenonceaux knew nothing, and before leaving the troubles and the tortures of this mistaken reign we must turn, by way of contrast, to watch the life of the Court in this palace by the Cher, before Diana's light is put out and a new mistress comes to take her dwelling-place.

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Chenonceaux

CHAPTER XIII

CHENONCEAUX (*Continued*)

In the gossip with which the pages of Brantôme are filled, the Court of Henry II. lives for us in all its details. We can see the King showing his stables to the Emperor's ambassador, and parading the young nobles of his suite, " mon autre haras de ces pages que j'estime autant que les autres," or taking him to see the famous greyhounds whose ancestors were brought to Saint Louis from Tartary, and those noble white deerhounds which Charles IX. would recommend as the only breed for a King to take out hunting: we can imagine the day at Court which the observant Venetian ambassador describes, such as it might often have been at Chenonceaux. It is early in the day, but the King, who rose with the sun, has been for some time closeted with De Guise, Vendôme, and the Constable talking over affairs of State in his new-fashioned " narrow council." After business come devotions, for the King attends regularly at mass, and after devotions, dinner; and now Henry has done with seriousness for the day—though counsellors and

secretaries are still at work in the great hall of the castle—and with Saint André by his side he rides forth a-hunting in the forest of Amboise. Vieilleville is with them too, talking of affairs at Metz,[1] or asking for the latest fashions in furniture or food at his friend's luxurious establishment at Saint Valéry; and as the sound of the hunters' horns grows fainter in the distance, and the western sun glows on the terraced garden, the walks begin to fill with the ladies of the Court, in the costumes Cesare Vecellio has made familiar—small velvet caps with strings of pearls and feathers, wide slashed sleeves and flowing robes with a long girdle drooping from the waist.

M. Ramus may perhaps be there, disputing with the King's doctor, Fernel, on a knotty point in mathematics, and little thinking that his cruel end shall come in the massacre of St. Bartholomew, and his mangled corpse be dragged about the streets of Paris by bloodthirsty Aristotelians: Jean Daurat helps the argument with a Greek quotation, and speaks of the promise of his pupil Ronsard with his fellow-countryman Muret, who shall put much sound learning into Montaigne's head. Amyot,

[1] See Bertrand de Salignac for the account of the operations of Claude de Lorraine, Duc de Guise, at Metz, and for much further information see Vieilleville's own *Mémoires*.

too, has left the Dauphin at his studies to have a word with Estienne about some new edition of the classics, or to tell the others to prepare their pretty speeches for Diana, who is just strolling across the drawbridge. This is her first appearance in public, but she has been up long before the rest and ridden early through the dewy fields in the cold morning air, then gone to bed again,[1] and in a graceful dishabille transacted what might come of business, or listened to the latest sonnet from the poets of the Court; and now she appears at last, fresh and provokingly attractive, ready to stand comparison with the fairest ladies about her, and to throw more energy and life than all the rest into her quiet greeting of the King as he comes back from hunting.

It is the Queen's turn now. She has felt somewhat neglected between the invincible Diana and this new prodigy from Scotland, who has turned the heads of all the courtiers in France; but the King and all his gentlemen move gaily towards the rooms of Catherine de Medicis, where, among the fascinating smiles and dances of the famous "escadron volant," the day is finished unconcernedly, and

[1] She allowed herself the luxury of a warming-pan, for which we have the authority of M. Nestor Roqueplan, in whose collection that privileged instrument reposes in good company, side by side with the warming-pans of Marie Stuart and Catherine de Medicis.

the long halberds of the archers of the guard begin to glisten in the moonlight as they go their rounds, clad in trunk hose and striped tunics broidered with the royal cipher. And so Chenonceaux falls into a graceful slumber. Let Diana sleep sound while she can, for the awakening is to be rude enough: the first shock came very unexpectedly.

In 1559, at the fêtes in celebration of the marriage of Alva and the Princess Elizabeth, the King had organized a tournament with great magnificence, forgetful of the evil omen with which his reign began, amid similar scenes of ill-considered splendour. Always a good horseman, Henry insisted on a bout with the young Comte de Lorges, son of Montgomery of the Scottish Guard. The trumpets ceased as they started, Vieilleville tells us, "which gave us the first trembling presage of the ill that was to happen;" they met and broke their lances, when, as they parted, the King was seen to sway forward in his saddle—the splinters of De Lorges' lance had entered his eye beneath the visor of his helmet. He was carried out fainting, lingered unconscious for four days, and only recovered to hand over the government formally to Catherine de Medicis, and then die.[1]

[1] See the details in Vieilleville of the experiments made (upon the heads of criminals) by the doctors to try and discover the

With the King's death came the favourite's disgrace. Diana was turned out of Chenonceaux by the Regent Catherine, and given Chaumont in exchange; but it never consoled her for her double grief, and she went to Anet for the rest of her life, where Goujon's statue might remind her of the royal love that she had lost.

The distinguishing marks of Catherine's strange character soon became apparent in her life at Chenonceaux. She had a mania for building, and to her is due the long gallery, raised upon the arches of De l'Orme, which is perhaps the least happy of the additions to the original château; she had, too, with all the bloodthirsty temperament of her race and her antecedents, the true Medici love for fêtes and extravagant revels in this western home, that might have recalled to her the festivals of her childhood on the Arno.[1]

It was not long before one of these great fêtes began. The Court at Amboise had requested a change of atmosphere, for the consequences of a long and persistent massacre of heretics are less

injury to the King's eye. Dumas describes the accident in *Les Deux Dianes.*

[1] Touraine is a country of strange and varied habitations; if the holes and caverns at Rochecorbon and Saumur suggested Troglodytes, there is in Chenonceaux an equal resemblance to the lake-dwellings of an earlier age.

pleasant to the well-conducted mind than the encouraging spectacle of executions still in progress, so Catherine took advantage of her opportunity and prepared a magnificent reception for the young King and Queen in her new home.

The Court, as we may suppose, had ridden straight southwards from St. Denis hors, and into the main road by the river at La Croix: a little farther on and they were at the turning to their right, which is the beginning of the main drive of the castle.

At the foot of every tree stood knots of women in their holiday attire, wearing great broad-brimmed rustic hats and waving many-coloured ribands, while their husbands and brothers with flags flying and drums beating made a brave show upon the little hill at the entrance to the park:[1] at the end of the long drive before the great court, the royal

[1] See a very rare little book, *Les Triomphes faictz à l'entrée de Francoys II. et de Marye Stuart au chasteau de Chenonceaux le Dymanche, Dernier Jour de Mars* (o.s.), (which was published at Tours in small 4to, reprinted by Techener in 1857), probably written by one Antoine le Plessis-Richelieu, Captain of the King's Guards at Amboise. Mézeray describing the conspiracy of Amboise says: "On donna la commandement des Mousquetaires à Cheval à Antoine du Plessis Richelieu, Gentilhomme Poitevin, tout avoué à la maison de Guise." He was called "le Moine" because he had given up Holy Orders for the military profession. His eldest brother, Louis, was ancestor of the famous Cardinal.

pair passed beneath a tall triumphal arch reared on four pillars wreathed with ivy, and inscribed "to the Divine Francis," with graceful reference to the seditions lately crushed. Farther on, past a great double fountain, stood two pyramids with Greek inscriptions, the one referring in a brazen way to the utility of a good conscience, the other praising the wakeful habits of Homeric counsellors.[1]

By now the King was crossing to the higher terrace by a bridge, beneath which countless fish were playing, much to the amusement of the suite, and on the terrace was a great tower, built with many holes, with a bright light within that shone through many-coloured glasses. As he entered the castle an infinity of "fuzées, grenades, et petardes" went off in streams of fire, and "the delighted company heard at the same time the roar of thirty cannons ranged upon the quay, which filled the air with echoes for a long time." The evening was too young yet for all the company to go indoors, and they strolled through the gardens to see the column raised by Primaticcio,[2] "on which was placed a

[1] "Nous avons été contrains," says Guillaume Bourgeat, the printer of this account at Tours, "d'imprimer les vers greques en caractères latins, d'autant que n'avions nuls caractères grecs, ce que nous aurons de brief, Dieu aidant."

[2] We can imagine Primaticcio's pleasure at being given the preference over Philibert de l'Orme, his rival, after some years of disfavour.

great golden head of Medusa, with parted lips and hair enlaced with snakes," by which was apparently conveyed that "the prudence and wisdom of *Minerva* accompanied the Queen that day." More columns rose in every corner, crowned with morions and arms, and bearing graceful references in weak distichs to the grief of the Queen-mother; and all the while more and more fireworks went up and fell hissing into the Cher, "so that the very water seemed to burn." Amid the echoes of the last triumphant burst of welcome on the terrace the company moved back past more triumphal arches, and naiads pouring "vin clairet" from their hospitable urns, to the entrance gate, where a Pallas, advancing from the balcony above, rained down a shower of flowers and leaves, inscribed with sonnets to the King and Queen. The very trees for many mornings after were vocal with rhyming tablets of more or less ill-written greeting.

It is pleasant to think that Marie Stuart must have spent some of the happiest months of her troubled life at Chenonceaux, with the young King, about this time. All Catherine's fêtes had not so fair an excuse. After a reception given to her son the King, Charles IX., in 1565, in the same grounds, she came here again to meet her favourite son, the Duc d'Anjou, who had gone to Chinon after the

marriage of Henry of Navarre and Marguerite, and here she heard of Henry's victory of Montcontour, and wished to change the castle's name to " Bonne Nouvelle," without success. In 1577 there was fresh triumph at the Huguenot defeat at Charité-sur-Loire, which had already been celebrated by extravagant orgies at Plessis-lez-Tours; but Catherine determined to outshine them all, and the pleasant fields of Chenonceaux lent themselves more readily to festivals than the somewhat sombre castle of Louis XI. with all its grim associations.

The King appeared dressed as a woman,[1] with " Master Love " under his arm, no doubt barking at Chicot, and with his " mignons " round him in such enormous ruffs, that " their heads," says the chronicler, " looked like the head of John the Baptist on a charger."

The Queen was there with her daughter Marguerite, and the gentle Louise de Lorraine, and all

[1] " Si qu'au premier abord chacun estoit en peine
S'il voyoit un roy-femme, ou bien un homme-reyne."

See Pierre de l'Estoile, *Journal de Henri III.*

Anthropologists may have noticed a " survival " of these extraordinary freaks of costume in the peculiar fondness of the Bank Holiday revellers of to-day for an interchange of their masculine headgear with the more alluring ornaments of their female friends.

the flying squadron of her maids of honour, with what little dress they had in flattering imitation of the costume which their masculine admirers had similarly exchanged for petticoats. Brantôme gives the list of all these lively ladies: Mesdemoiselles de Rohan, de Saint André, Davila with stories of the siege of Cyprus, two sisters Gabrielle and Diane d'Estrées, Madame de Sauve, of whom we shall hear more at Blois, and many others. "Tout y estoit en bel ordre," says l'Estoile, so we leave them, with as little scandal as we may, to have their revel out.

Some ten years afterwards the central figure of the fête was dead. Catherine had passed away at Blois, and Henry had been murdered. One of the most unnoticed of the whole throng at the festivals of Catherine came back to Chenonceaux and brought a great change with her. Louise de Lorraine, of the great house of the Guises, was of very different mould from the wicked little Duchesse de Montpensier, or any of her proud relations—a weak, pure soul, who spent her life in prayer for her worthless husband, and "stayed where she was," alone with her grief and without the comfort of children to help her bear its burden. The creditors of Catherine de Medicis had carried off all that was portable of the work of Bernard Palissy or the sculptures

of the Italians,[1] and the first days of Louise were busied in arranging her own "meubles, bijoux et livres," of which the catalogue has been preserved by Prince Galitzin. Among the books was a description by M. Balthasar de Beaujoyeulx (printed in 1582) of the appearance of Louise at the marriage fêtes of the Duc de Joyeuse. This quiet, pure woman, in the midst of a licentious Court, had a beauty of her own that shrank from the light of criticism in an outspoken time, and passed easily unnoticed among the rest. It is to the Venetian ambassador, as usual, that we must look for a delicate appreciation of her character and worth. "She is full of a sweet simplicity," says Girolamo Lippomano, "which nothing disturbs save the presence of her lord the King, upon whom her eyes are always fixed. Her face is pale and somewhat thin, but she has brilliant eyes and light hair over a pure brow and slight features."

At Chenonceaux she stayed for eleven years, vainly demanding justice from Henry IV.; but the King could not do much; he had but little income either, to bestow on her; but it was not much she spent upon herself. One day when she was Queen, she had only a hundred crowns in the world, and

[1] See *Les Archives de Chenonceaux*, published by M. l'Abbé Chevalier, from the original MSS.

gave them all to a messenger who brought good tidings; and now her small income served her to continue her charity to the families of the poor on the estate. A monument of her care for poor prisoners still survives in her benefactions to several Paris prisons.

During the war she writes to the King, who sometimes came to visit her himself, that the Sieur de Rosny was trampling over all her ground with his horses, to the great detriment of the good people of the country, "que je vous prie vous souvenir, Monsieur, qu'ils me sont vassaulz et tenus pour moi comme enfants très affectionez."

So, between weeping and caring for her tenants, her sad life wears to its end. Visitors come to her occasionally—Marguerite de Valois, or the King with Gabrielle d'Estrées, but none of them satisfies her sense of injustice and her bitter grief. In 1601 she died in the Château de Moulins.

Chenonceaux now passed into the hands of the Duchesse de Mercœur and the Vendôme family, and here, while Richelieu was controlling the destinies of France, and the Three Musketeers were quarrelling with his Eminence's guards, Gaston d'Orléans was entertained at supper while the gay Duc de Beaufort,[1] in despair at all attempts to make

[1] Known in Paris at the time as the "Roi des Halles."

her father see a joke, turned to try conversation with his daughter, "la grande Mademoiselle"; here, in 1650, came Mazarin to be reconciled with the Duc de Vendôme; and shortly after, the footsteps of Anne of Austria with her son, Louis XIV., were heard in the gallery which had seen so many beauties, but few so royal and so fair. A trace of this visit was left at Versailles, where some statues taken from Chenonceaux were sent to grace the royal gardens.

The last Duc de Vendôme connected with the château was famous for his ugliness, and when very old, and still uglier if possible than before, he married an extremely plain grand-daughter of the great Condé. Mademoiselle d'Enghien, being unable even in the country to get rid of some of her old habits, was so unfortunate as to drink herself to death.

The romance of Chenonceaux seemed in danger of being utterly crushed, when a fresh reign began with the new attractions of the literary Madame Dupin, to whom the place was sold in 1733 by the Duc de Bourbon, not without great legal disputes, in which the whole process of Diane de Poitiers' elaborate arrangements for possession was brought to light again with a new meaning. One La Ferme had been appointed in the name of the nation as

proprietor of Chenonceaux, which was thus considered to be a Crown domain, and there is no little irony in the fact of all Diana's schemes, which profited herself so little, having been the main instrument in proving the inalienable rights of this later owner.

Even the debts of Catherine de Medicis came up for discussion, and it was only when the last of the descendants of her host of creditors had been proved satisfied that M. Claude Dupin, the Fermier-Général, a second Bohier in fact, came to Chenonceaux.

This new proprietor was a friend of Montesquieu and gathered in his wife's salons the most famous literary celebrities of the day. It was a different kind of life from any that had yet been seen in Chenonceaux. Madame Dupin had a certain intelligent little secretary, who actually had the temerity to fall in love with her, and be gently enough reproved; it is Jean Jacques Rousseau, who shall become the great man of the company later on. Bernis is there, and Buffon, and Voltaire, and unhappy-looking Diderot, with all the Encyclopædists in his train, exhorting poor Jean Jacques to "continue virtuous, for the state of those who have ceased to be so makes me shudder."

The great Revolution, which owed no little to these last visitors to the château, spared its beauty

from the ruin with which it visited so many more illustrious and more noted noble houses. The grand-nephew of Madame Dupin, René, Comte de Villeneuve, died here in 1863, after the castle had had yet another literary visit, from George Sand; and the last memories of Chenonceaux hark back again to Scotland with its latest owners, M. Pelouze and his wife Madame Wilson, a relative of that Daniel Wilson from Glasgow who in 1789 was Under-Secretary of State to the Minister of Finance in France, and whose descendant has but lately gained a somewhat unenviable notoriety in French politics. The wire of his telephone to Paris still hangs in the gallery of the château.

By Madame Pelouze much was done to restore the ancient glories of Chenonceaux, which had been somewhat dimmed by the neglect of the Vendômes, but the traditional financial embarrassments which seem to have hung about the place ever since the bankruptcy of the Marques, its first owners, have unfortunately reappeared; the enormous sums spent in decoration, and the splendid fêtes that recalled the galas of the sixteenth century, resulted in the arrival of the creditors again, though for less sums than in the days of Catherine de Medicis.

The château is now in the hands of the Crédit Foncier, who charge their visitors a franc a head—

"sic transit gloria"—but much of the beauty and all the interest of Chenonceaux still remain. As we left it we saw a solitary swan that floated in the moat; her white breast cut the mirrored image of the walls, and reminded us strangely of the old times that had passed from them. And indeed the traveller will find much that is worthy of a longer visit here than his guide will probably allow him in this home of beautiful women and gigantic debts. He will not be impressed as by the solid masonry and bulk of Chambord or Langeais, but neither will he be left with the sense of a somewhat too respectable and comfortless blank of tradition and association; he may not find here all the history that seems incrusted on the very stones of Blois, but he will not see the blood of Guises on the floors: the charm of the place is a more domestic one; the very attempts at fortification only add to its picturesqueness, and are obviously only meant to do so. It seems built especially for the enjoyment of the brilliant Court favourites who so often were its inmates, and to reflect, in the exuberant fancy and brightness of its architecture, the gaieties which were meant to be habitual within its walls.

The rich decorations of the rooms of Francis I., the windows of the boudoir from which Diane de Poitiers watched for the coming of her royal lover,

the pictured faces all along the great gallery upon whose ceiling the light from the waves of the Cher dances in strange flickering fragments, all will impress him with a sense of beauty, and will leave him with a pleasant memory. At Amboise he will see the dark side of the picture, and watch the next act of the drama at the Court of Francis II. and Marie Stuart.

Two Queens of France

CHAPTER XIV

TWO QUEENS OF FRANCE

"La nef qui disjoint nos amours
N'a eu de moi que la moitié,
Une part te reste, elle est la tienne,
Je la fie à ton amitié,
Pour que de l'autre il te souvienne."

The scene in French history in which the children of Catherine de Medicis played the leading parts, and which ended in the capitulation of Paris to Henry IV., begins with the reign of Francis II. All the principal characters of the drama either appear, or are in the near distance. Catherine de Medicis, the Queen-mother, and the young Queen, Marie Stuart, will be seen first and most clearly; of Marguerite de Valois we shall hear more later on, as of Jeanne d'Albret, Madame de Montpensier, and the lovely Madame de Sauves, Marquise de Noirmoutier.

The reign of Diane de Poitiers was the beginning of an influence upon the highest issues of French politics, of women with far less self-control, with even less scrupulousness, than Henry's favourite—

an influence mainly Italian in its origin, as has been noticed, and to which was due all the misery and bloodshed which the unbridled passions of such women could not but cause.

Of the men, there appear at this time the first generation of the Guises, the Duke François and the Cardinal de Lorraine, powerful with their niece upon the throne of France, the forerunners of the famous Henri de Guise and the second Cardinal; Anne de Montmorency, the Constable, is here too, with his nephews the Châtillons; Antoine of Navarre, father of " le bon Béarnais " ; the first Prince of Condé; De l'Hôpital, Harley, and De Thou;—these make up the more important actors in the drama that is to follow. And upon the scenes, or waiting for their turn, are the maids of honour of Catherine de Medicis, the " mignons " of the future Henry III.; Besme and Coconnas, the murderers of St. Bartholomew; the grim perfumer of the Queen-mother, Poltrot, Jacques Clement, and Ravaillac. The literary men stand off from such forbidding company: Ronsard, Montaigne, and Estienne Jodelle, with Beauvais, tutor to the young Prince of Navarre, and many more, are hovering about the Court.

Let us look closer at some of these as they throng to the Louvre, where Catherine and the Guises are

staying up the young King for his first attempt at royalty. With the Constable, who is talking to Condé and the King of Navarre, are his nephews, Admiral Coligny and the Colonel d'Andelot, watching the clear, keen face of the Cardinal de Guise, with its quick, cat-like eye and the strange hard turn at the corners of his lip, half hidden in the fair hair of the beard; beside him is his brother, the brave Captain François, gray of tint and thin in face and body, with light grayish hair, "figure d'aventurier, de parvenu qui voudra parvenir toujours"; in the midst is the little King with his pale puffed face and flat nose,[1] between the Scotchwoman and the Florentine, whose strong, intelligent head, the true muzzle of the Medicis, becomes all but bestial in the prominent mouth and underhanging jowl of later life; but on the other side, in contrast to the pale Italian, is the lovely Marie, for whose love this half-grown King, distracted at the gift of so much beauty, was to exhaust his feeble strength and die; for never was there charmer of more power than Marie Stuart. Fortunately we are only concerned with her life in France, and with the

[1] "Il avait le nez fort camus," says Louis Regnier de la Planche in a passage in which the various weaknesses of the sickly Francis are detailed. Anne the Constable was known as "le camus de Montmorency," from his flat nose.

later years so fruitful in controversy of her chequered career in Scotland, we have nothing to do.

King James of Scotland had married the daughter of Claude de Lorraine, Duc de Guise, and from the troubles of a country constantly at variance with England, their daughter Marie escaped when quite young to the shelter of the French Court. There we hear of her first in 1554, at a fête in the gardens of St. Germain, where she appeared by the side of the pretty Miss Fleming. Authentic portraits of her a few years later show her with the auburn-tinted hair and the fine transparent skin of the painting at Azay-le-Rideau, the complexion she shared with her uncle the Cardinal, and the quick, light eye of brownish tinge that could be hard and fixed at will; but her youthful beauty, which was undeniable at this time at any rate, was the least among her charms. "Showing an astonishing acquaintance," says Michelet, "with books, affairs, and men, well versed in politics at ten, and mistress of the French Court at fifteen, she ruled everything by her word, by the charm of her presence, which troubled every heart. In this wonder, whom the Guises brought to France, every human gift was united save self-control and tact; fantastic and visionary, for all her keenness in intrigue, for all her seeming cunning

and finesse, she ended by falling into every snare her enemies spread for her." [1]

Yet during the few months of her power in France, a power that has been too little recognised, no one could escape her influence, the Queen-mother no more than the rest. A little court of poets gathered round her, Du Bellay and De Maison Fleur [2] among them, whose verses were answered with her own, and gave yet another charm to such memories as those of Chenonceaux. She left France with the sorrow of her young dead husband in her heart, and the sweet verses of her favourite Ronsard in her memory, verses in which for once the poet forgot to be classical and gave utterance to a natural beauty of pathos and expression, but too rare in his writings.

[1] It is interesting to note French opinion on her character from another point of view.

"L'ennemie la plus intime," says Balzac, "et la plus habile de Catherine de Médicis était sa belle-fille la reine Marie, petite blonde, malicieuse comme une soubrette, fière comme une Stuart qui portait trois couronnes, instruite comme un vieux savant, espiègle comme une pensionnaire de convent, amoureuse de son mari comme une courtisane l'est de son amant, dévouée à ses oncles qu'elle admirait, et heureuse de voir le roi François partager, elle y aidant, la bonne opinion qu'elle avait d'eux."—*Études Philosophiques sur Catherine de Medicis*, p. 90.

[2] Not so well known as his companions; he was a Huguenot writer of some celebrity in his time, author of *Les Divins Cantiques*, Anvers, 1580.

"Adieu," she cries, upon the deck of the ship that bore her from Calais. "Adieu donc, ma chère France, je ne vous verrai jamais plus." The words of Béranger are too true—

> "Adieu, charmant pays de France,
> Que je dois tant cherir;
> Berceau de mon heureuse enfance,
> Adieu, te quitter c'est mourir."

She left a country where she was always regretted, and which kept a romantic memory of her beauty, a tender pity for her sorrows. The Guises could make no motion at her death, for they were paralysed by the murder of Le Balafré, but the French Court had done its utmost to save the victim of its plots with Scotland, and the whole country felt the compassion for her misfortunes, which makes Brantôme's account rise above the ordinary level of a gossiping Court chronicle.

"This Queen," says Giovanni Correro eight years afterwards, "while she kept the love of her honour and the fear of God before her eyes, reigned in a most admirable manner, so that all the world wondered to see a young girl, so delicately nurtured and so little used to government, able to resist the influences against her. The Pope especially favoured her, sending her encouragement with words and

money. But her joy was short-lived; at one blow she lost her husband, her freedom, and her crown."

"Tout ce qui est de beau ne se garde longtemps,"

sings Ronsard,

"Les roses et les lis ne règnent qu'un printemps,
Ainsi vostre beauté, seulement apparue
Quinze ou seize ans en France est soudain disparue." [1]

She left France and the intrigues of the decaying dynasty of the Valois for a rude atmosphere where stronger wills than hers were paramount, and where she had no longer strength to fight against necessity.[2]

Of very different mould is the woman standing near her by the King's chair. It becomes necessary to have a clear idea of the character which dominates the next thirty years of French history, and who, in 1533, left the intrigues of Italy, to contaminate the French Court.

[1] Malherbe's improvement on these lines ran as follows:—

"Elle était de ce monde où les plus belles choses
Ont le pire destin;
Et, rose, elle a vécu ce que vivent les roses
L'espace d'un matin."

[2] "L'Angleterre impie," cries Dumas, "ce bourreau fatal de tout ce que la France eut de divin, tua avec elle la grâce, comme elle avait déjà tué l'inspiration en Jeanne d'Arc, comme elle devait tuer en Napoléon le génie."

About Catherine de Medicis at least, there can be no doubt as to the verdict, and even the brilliant attempt of Balzac cannot change the judgment of posterity on one of the most infamous women who ever held the royal power.

The present school of historical criticism, if it delights in destroying old ideals, has shown itself no less skilful at whitewashing characters hitherto condemned without appeal; and in many cases a fairer estimate of results has been arrived at; but difficult as it is to accept even a modified picture of the villainies of a Louis XI., it becomes impossible to acquiesce in the strained attempt after originality and paradox, which becomes obvious in any apology for Catherine; nor will the well-worn argument of the dangers of her situation or the habits of her time suffice to clear her character. Such arguments might have been used in her favour, were her acts, her policy, and her influence other than they are—in the face of results they become absolutely untenable. Nor is it merely a wholesale feeling of disgust at the tendencies and methods of the age, that leads us unequivocally to condemn one of its chief personages. Of the three Queens of that time it was given to but one to succeed, and in her success to build up the greatness of the English nation. The unhappy fate of Marie Stuart has procured a

pardon for her faults, the death of Catherine de Medicis was welcomed as a release from an ever-present evil, as the beginning of an attempt to better things. The lives of Coligny, of Jeanne d'Albret, of Henry of Navarre, of Michel de l'Hôpital, show that even in the sixteenth century it was possible to fulfil many duties, many obligations, without the stain of lying or of murder.[1]

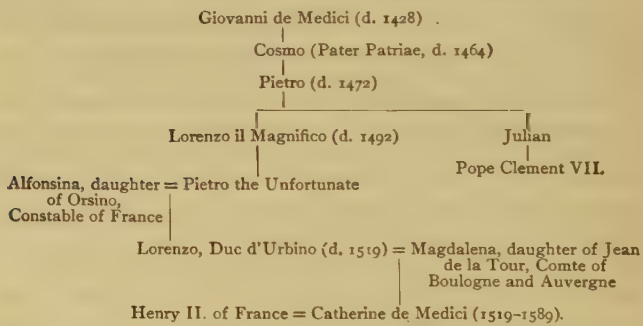
When first Catherine came to the Court to marry the young Dauphin, with her caressing manners and her Spanish etiquette, Diane de Poitiers was

[1] Of contemporary authorities perhaps the most severe criticism is the *Discours merveilleux de la vie, actions et déportemens de la reine Catherine de Médicis,* attributed to Bèze, probably the work of Estienne, and in any case a brilliant piece of writing—first published in 1574. D'Aubigné is also on the Huguenot side against the Queen. Brantôme gives us the extreme of all that could be said in her favour by a partisan of her Court. In De Castelnau, Tavannes, De Bordenaye, and the *Mémoires* of Marguerite de Valois, there is also much to be gathered. The Venetian ambassadors in France at this time, when Venice was still powerful enough to be fearless in judging other nations when she wished, have a feeling of honesty and strength behind them, that gives great value to their impartial judgments, while their artistic sensibility gives a colour and a refinement to their descriptions, very rare in other writings. Finally, a large collection of the actual letters of the Queen-mother afford a source of information that admits of no dispute. Passing over English writers, and omitting the *Life* by Balzac as a brilliant literary paradox, the *Catherine de Médicis, Mère des Rois, etc.,* by M. Capefigue, 1856, may be taken as an example of the apologetic school in France, fortunately not a numerous one.

pointing out "the shopkeeper's daughter" to the courtiers, and the keen-eyed Venetian ambassador, Marino Giustiniano had already noticed the discontent of the whole nation at the marriage. "Men find," he says, "that the Pope (her uncle) has deceived the King," and the Dauphin himself was no better pleased with the match; it was not merely as a merchant's daughter,[1] not merely as one to whom deceit and lying were as habitual as breath, that he

[1] For details of the early life of Catherine see the researches of M. Alberi and M. de Remmont, collected from the archives at Venice.

Her descent from the founder of the family is as follows:—


Giovanni de Medici (d. 1428)
Cosmo (Pater Patriae, d. 1464)
Pietro (d. 1472)
Lorenzo il Magnifico (d. 1492)
Julian
Pope Clement VII.
Alfonsina, daughter of Orsino, Constable of France
= Pietro the Unfortunate
Lorenzo, Duc d'Urbino (d. 1519)
= Magdalena, daughter of Jean de la Tour, Comte of Boulogne and Auvergne
Henry II. of France = Catherine de Medici (1519–1589).

It is curious to note that Catherine was distantly related to both her rivals at the French Court—to Marie Stuart through the Duke of Albany, son of James III. and Anne de la Tour, the aunt of Catherine; to Diane de Poitiers through her father, Jean de Poitiers, whose mother, Jeanne de Boulogne, was an aunt of Magdalena de la Tour.

In connection with Catherine's own children the Pope's remark on leaving her at Marseilles is interesting. "A figlia d' inganno non manca mai la figliuolanza."

disliked her, but "as some serpent born of tainted parents in the charnel-houses of Italy." [1]

The strange sight of the foreign wife protected and befriended by the French mistress, is explained by Diana's fear that the throne in default of direct heirs would fall to her enemies; and when at last a child was born, it was the weak and ill-formed Francis, who died before his time, and bequeathed the civil wars to France; then came the madman Charles IX., with the blood of St. Bartholomew's Day upon his hands; then the effeminate Henry, weak and spiteful as he was cowardly, who debased the country to his own degraded level; and after bearing such a brood, the pale, fat-faced Florentine grew old and battened on the miseries of France. Educated among the faction and intrigue of the Italian Republics, when murder was the habitual solution of a difficulty, with little knowledge of French customs, no prejudices of birth or aristocracy, as incredulous of good as she was superstitious and given over to enchantments,[2] she only saw

[1] She had no children for ten years. This, say her apologists, was more Henry's fault than hers, but the fact remains, and I cannot help seeing more truth in Michelet, than in the untranslatable explanations of Brantôme, Balzac, and the others.

[2] See the traces of her cabalistic figures at Chaumont, her tower "Uraniae Sacrum" at Blois. "The eccentricities of genius," says M. Capefigue.

in France another Florence to be cowed by the old mean methods, and in the factions of Guises and Châtillons another quarrel to be settled like the feuds of Medici and Pazzi. Where it was impossible to avail herself of the secrets of Ruggieri, she unhesitatingly made every use which a cynical immorality could suggest of the "escadron volant" that was always at her orders. The statesman whose position saved him from assassination was seldom man enough to resist the temptations of an intrigue; he was entangled at the critical moment, and his opportunity was lost. Antoine de Navarre and Condé were only two examples among many of the astuteness of the Queen-mother's policy. Jeanne d'Albret's letters from Blois show the disgust and alarm which were aroused in a good woman by contact with this society at Court.[1]

Crushed and humiliated from her very infancy, broken by the contempt of Henry II., at the mercy of his mistress, and eclipsed by the young Queen of

[1] M. Capefigue's explanation is worth hearing. By the sweet influence of the "escadron volant" the soft airs and graces of the Court were to tone down the rough and violent society of the time. "Au milieu des plaisirs des fêtes et du luxe, elle espérait user ces âmes ardentes, ces cœurs de fer et de feu." After this it is only to be expected that we should find that "the Mignons were encouraged to show what a Court ought to be," that "Henry of Navarre was coarse compared with them," and other extraordinary statements.

Scotland, Catherine seemed to see in the early years of Charles IX.'s reign, her first glimpse of the power she thirsted for, which had almost escaped her in the short life of Francis II.

But the strength of the Guises soon taught her, at Vassy and at Fontainebleau, that her time was not yet. "She felt their heavy hand upon her neck and bowed her head; her heart fell back again to the meanness that was natural to it": she played the good Queen-mother at the Guises' bidding.

"She never leaves the King," writes Giovanni Michiel, who gives some striking details of the life of the French Court. "She keeps the seal which the King uses, which they call cachet. . . . The Queen-mother is very fond of the good things of life; her habits are irregular and she eats much, but afterwards seeks remedy in strong exercise; she walks, rides,[1] and is never still; strangest of all, she has even been seen out hunting. But in spite of all this, her face is always pale and almost of a greenish tinge, and she is very fat." Even the Italian ambassadors cannot find much to praise in their compatriot, though they do their best. "As to the Queen," says another, Michele Suriano, "it is

[1] "Elle estoit fort bien à cheval et hardie, et s'y tenoit de fort bonne grace, ayant esté la première qui avoit mis la jambe sur l'arçon, d'autant que la grace y estoit bien plus belle et apparoissante que sur la planchette."—*Brantôme.*

enough to say she is a true Florentine if ever there was one, but it is impossible to deny that she is a woman of great tact and intellectual vigour." Brantôme and Davila agree in this last opinion, which is perhaps the best that can be said of Catherine, for even the feelings of maternity which she shared in common with the brutes were perverted by her superstition and her cruelty, and warped into a preference for the least worthy of her sons, the miserable Henry, Duc d'Anjou. Her son Charles had only frightened her whenever he attempted to show a will of his own; for Francis she felt too much contempt for love; in Henry alone she could see her own nature reflected, womanish and Italian, witty, heartless and corrupted.

It is only necessary to peruse the letters she was perpetually scribbling [1] at the time to be convinced of her true character. Throughout them all is the same undercurrent of commercial vulgarity, of plotting and intrigue, of requests for help for Gondi and Bizago, and the rest of her Italian protégés.

"She does everything a man could do, and yet she is scarcely loved," says Correro again naïvely in the reign of Charles IX. "The Huguenots say that she deceived them by her fair words and her

[1] "Je la vis une fois, pour une après disnée, escrire de sa main vingt pures lettres et longues."—*Brantôme.*

false air of kindliness, while all the time she was plotting their destruction with the Catholic King; the Catholics, on the other hand, say that if the Queen had not encouraged the Huguenots they would not have gone so far."

"Extremes disgusted her," explains M. Capefigue: "she tried to unite both parties to the King." As a matter of fact she played fast and loose with one after the other, and the only consistent motive in the hand-to-mouth policy of her whole life was her insatiate ambition for her own and for her children's greatness.[1]

It scarcely needed the terrible picture in Dumas' *Reine Margot*, of Catherine ranging like a wolf among the dead, for us to imagine how she ruined the diseased and excitable nature of her son Charles, and drove him slowly mad by hideous plots and countless thwartings of his feeble attempts at righteous government. So well recognised had her character become that the danger of her friendship was a proverb at the Court.[2] No one could feel safe with a woman who took such obvious delight in

[1] See Martin, *Hist.* ix. 271.

[2] "Quand elle appelait quelqu'un 'mon amy' c'estoit qu'elle l'estimoit sot ou qu'elle estoit en colère," etc. . . . "Je la vis une fois . . . tout du long du chemin lire dans un parchemin tout un procès verbal que l'on avoit fait de Derdois, basque, secretaire favory du Connestable," etc.—*Brantôme.*

condemnations and in trials, whose relaxation from a satiety of festivals was the sight of organised butcheries, which restored her the energies for renewed debauchery and dissipation. From the revels at Blois she moves to the massacres at Amboise, and completes the round of pleasure with the fêtes at Chenonceaux: even if her complicity in the murders of St. Bartholomew were not completely proved, it would be hard to acquit any one who had such interest in the death of the Huguenot leaders as had Catherine, but it was entirely owing to her evil suggestions that the mind of the unhappy King was worked up to the pitch of frenzy required to let loose the wild fanaticism of Paris, that might even still have been restrained. After the massacre she triumphantly showed the papers of the murdered Admiral Coligny to Walsingham, Elizabeth's ambassador. "Le voilà votre ami," she cried, "voyez s'il aimait l'Angleterre."—"Madame," replies the Englishman, "at least he loved France." [1] And as a true lover of his country, as one of the few real heroes of that time, Coligny was especially obnox-

[1] Among many contemporary witnesses see La Noue's testimony to the worth of Coligny in *Discours Politiques et Militaires,* xxvi. "Troisièmes Troubles," Bâle, 1587, p. 702. "Or, si quelqu'un en ces lamentables guerres a grandement travaillé et du corps et de l'esprit, on peut dire que c'a esté M. l'Amiral . . . somme, c'était un personnage digne de restituer un Estat affoibly et corrompue."

ious to Catherine; and France, which still trembled, began at last to see the truth. "She is accused," says Giovanni Michiel in 1575, "of every evil that has desolated the kingdom; up till this time she was but little liked, now she is detested." For thirteen years longer her pale face was at the King's shoulder whispering the venom of her counsels to his cowardly heart. In the reign of Henry III. at Blois we shall meet her again, and there the end comes worthily, after her son, who had begun his career with the death of the chief of the Protestants, had ended it with the murder of the head of the Catholic League. Her tricks and schemes are over, she is found out at last, and dies beneath the rooms where Guise was stabbed to death; her body, which found but scant and hasty burial, was left almost forgotten, and hurried to its tomb from the Church of St. Sauveur.

Amboise

CHAPTER XV

AMBOISE

"Carolus Octavus primus me erexit in urbem;
Hunc fontem, Hos muros, Hæc mihi templa dedit
Ambosa."

BISHOP OF AREZZO TO PIERO DI MEDICI, 1493.

THE Castle of Amboise stands high above the town, like another Acropolis above a smaller Athens; it rises upon the only height visible for some distance, and is in a commanding position for holding the level fields of Touraine around it, and securing the passage of the Loire between Tours and Chaumont, which is the next link in the chain that ends at Blois.

The river at this point is divided in two by an island, as is so often the case where the first bridge-builders sought to join the wide banks of the Loire, and on this little spot between the waters Clovis is said to have met Alaric before he overthrew the power of the Visigoths in Aquitaine.

Amboise gains even more from the river than the other châteaux of the Loire. The magnificent round tower that springs from the end of Charles VIII.'s façade completely commands the ap-

proaches of the bridge, and the extraordinary effect of lofty masonry, produced by building on the summit of an elevation and carrying the stone courses upwards from the lower ground, is here seen at its best.

Through the white houses of the little town that cluster round the lofty castle, "like crumbs that have fallen from a well-laden table," [1] we passed towards the archway which gives entrance to the castle from behind, though the "drawbridge, which had an invention to let one fall, if not premonished," no longer existed. The moats across which Evelyn passed in 1644, and which are clearly drawn in prints of the sixteenth century,[2] no longer exist. A winding ascent led us into the gardens, which have a special charm of beauty, removed and isolated from the common life below, lifted high in the air on the great rock of the fortress, and surrounded by its towers and terraces. Here we were left to wander for a time when we first arrived, and discovered alone the lovely little chapel of St. Hubert, with an

[1] Mr. Henry James, *op. cit.* The few chapters on Touraine by this writer are full of picturesque and appreciative touches of the impression which the mere exterior of all these châteaux leaves upon an artistic visitor; see especially his description of Blois (*A Little Tour in France*).

[2] In the picture of La Renaudie's death, for instance, which will be referred to in subsequent pages.

extraordinary carving above the doorway, representing St. Hubert's encounter with the miraculous Stag. The building looks very tiny in one corner of this vast courtyard, but the charming effect of its light buttresses, rising from below and clinging to the great outer walls of rock and brickwork until they end in finely chiselled pinnacles that blossom from the angles of its roof, is completed by a richness and care in the workmanship of the interior very rarely surpassed by any monument of its time; the inner surface of its walls is a marvel of beautiful stone carving fine as lace, and shows up the more as it is almost the only work of the kind to be seen at Amboise. The chapel was built [1] by Charles VIII. after his return from Italy, and was no doubt carved by the Italian artists who came with him. There is a strangely grotesque figure of an ape above the altar, which is mentioned by M. Champfleury (*Histoire de la Caricature au moyen âge*) as peculiarly distinctive of that period of Italian taste. The whole has been restored and strengthened with the

[1] Any one who knows Oxford will remember the carving which is above the entrance gate of Merton; let him imagine this inserted above the door of Exeter College Chapel, and the whole raised upon steep walls many feet into the air, and he will have a faint idea of the chapel at Amboise, which is on much the same lines (very much reduced, but in perfect proportion) as the Sainte Chapelle at Paris, with the same light spire.

greatest care and success since 1872 by the architect of M. le Comte de Paris, in whose possession the castle then was, and it is by his care, too, that the beauty of the great towers, built by Charles VIII. about the same time, remains in its original condition, stripped of the hideous modern erections which formerly defaced them. Amboise has not always met with such careful treatment; in 1806 a certain vandal senator, one Roger Ducos, irreparably destroyed a great part of the old buildings to avoid the trouble and expense of keeping them in proper repair; nor did the war of 1870 spare the place entirely, for when the bridge was blown up, the excessive quantity of powder employed loosened the foundations of several parts of the château, and almost produced incalculable disaster.

Little more than the actual rooms and walls built by Charles VIII., with various modern restorations that were only necessitated from decay and never look incongruous, now remains at Amboise. We shall see more of them as we look closer into the story of the castle, and though of the interior there is absolutely nothing worth inspection left, the outside walls and terraces have a grandeur all their own that compensates for any shortcomings within.

But Amboise has a history before the days of Charles VIII. There was without doubt a Roman

camp here, but the traditions of the ubiquitous Cæsar must be received with caution.[1] The so-called "Greniers de César," strange, unexplained constructions caverned in the soft rock, are proved to be the work of a later age by that same indefatigable Abbé Chevalier to whom we have been already indebted for so much archæological research. A possible explanation of them is contained in an old Latin history of the castle, which goes down to the death of Stephen of England. According to this,[2] the Romans had held Amboise from the days of Cæsar till the reign of Diocletian; the Baugaredi or Bagaudæ then put them to flight, but let the rest of the inhabitants remain, who, "being afraid to live above ground, tunnelled beneath it, and made a

[1] The Chronicle written by the monk Jean de Marmoutier in the twelfth century says that Cæsar on his way back from the siege of Bourges was so struck with the strategical position of Amboise that he built a tower upon the rock, and raised upon the whole a great statue of the god Mars, which fell in a miraculous storm raised by St. Martin to abolish the emblems of paganism. Touraine is full of the strangest traditions of Julius Cæsar. The most amusing instance of such stories I have found is the passport gravely asserted to be authentic which runs as follows: "Laissez passer le nommé César. (Signé) Vercingetorix."

[2] "Liber de Compositione Castri Ambaciæ et ipsius Dominorum Gestis," which is No. 9 in a collection bound together called *Veterum aliquot Scriptorum qui in Galliæ Bibliothecis maxime Benedictorum latuerant Spicilegium*, tom. x., published in Paris 1671.

great colony of subterranean dwellings in the holes they had dug out," a custom apparently common in Touraine from the earliest times, and of which we have already noticed several instances. The Romans at any rate left unmistakable traces of their presence; many of their architectural remains still exist, and their fort is spoken of by Sulpicius Severus; but they can have built no bridge of stone, for in St. Gregory's time there were only boats available for the crossing of the river.[1]

One more detail occurs in the Latin chronicler which is too attractive to English readers to be omitted, in spite of the suspicions somewhat brutally expressed in a marginal note by some more modern critic. At the time when the Romans had lost all hold upon the province, one Maximus, the captain of the castle, gave his daughter in marriage to the King of Britain, after which it came into possession of King Arthur, who gave it back to the Franks "before he sailed away to conquer Mordred, and was slain in the Isle of Avalon."

But by the time of Clovis, Amboise begins to stand clearly out from the mist of tradition and uncertainty, and in the ninth century the great tower, which had already become a fortress, was in the

[1] M. Mabille, *op. cit.* (cap. i.), *Bibl. de l'École des Chartes*, Touraine.

power of the Counts of Anjou, and in 1016 we hear of the Angevin captain, Pontlevoy, bringing back much plunder from the conquest of Odo of Blois and storing it in the great keep of Amboise.

Not till the fifteenth century did the castle become royal property, when it was confiscated by Charles VII. as a punishment for treacherous dealings with the invading English very similar to the treason discovered at Chenonceaux just before. But beyond threatening the fortifications of the place this King did little for his new possession.

In a few years the castle is overshadowed by the cruel spectre of Louis XI., whose memory has already spoilt several charming views for us. It was to Amboise that the father of this unfilial prince was carried from Chinon on his way north, when wearied out by the annoyance caused by the Dauphin's plots. The castle had become a royal residence, and soon after the whole town turns out to meet the new King with a "moralité que maistre Estienne avait faite pour jouer ladite joyeuse venue," for Amboise was already famous for those dramatic performances always so dear to the French, and particularly to these citizens, in the old days at any rate. There is no trace of such frivolities now in the sleepy little town.

Then, "wine was given to all comers to drink at the expense of the town," with a wild hospitality

which told upon the civic treasury somewhat too heavily; but they made merry while they could: Louis XI. was but newly crowned, the whips had not yet changed to scorpions. In less than four years the actors had thrown away their motley, and, clad in what steel they had, were formed into a civic guard for the protection of the town. The Duke of Burgundy had already begun to show how true he was to be to the troublesome traditions of his house, and the word "Peronne" had furnished the latest jest for Paris, always ready to laugh at a *faux pas* even of its King.

It was at Amboise that Louis XI. instituted the Order of St. Michael, that was to rival the dignity of the famous Order of the Golden Fleece, and at this time the arms of France were first surrounded with the chain of cockle-shells that held the figure of the Saint conquering Satan.[1] A representation of a meeting of this Order in August 1469 at Amboise occurs in the "Statutes of the Order," dated from Plessis-lez-Tours, which is decorated with miniatures, and preserved at Paris.

But in spite of troubles with Burgundy and taxations from the King's council, all brightness was not quite gone from the little town, for more Mystery

[1] Travellers who have visited Mont St. Michel will agree that the shells from Cancale and that part of the coast quite deserve their proud position in the royal escutcheon.

Plays were occasioned by the birth of the future Charles VIII., and not many years after Louis made his last visit to Amboise to give his son his blessing, whatever that might be worth, before retiring to try to keep out death by lock and key, by moats and man-traps, in his dismal fortress at Plessis-lez-Tours.

During his reign Amboise, both town and castle, suffered from the depression that was general throughout France; even their Mystery Plays seem to have somewhat flagged. Some three hundred years of jesting at the Pope and the morality of abbeys had begun to weary; these representations, which had begun by being always of a religious character, had made a new departure in the *Mistère du Siège d'Orléans*, already quoted; yet even here there is a whole company of heavenly actors. Before this the author could merely change the words of Scripture in the mouths of secondary personages whose comic interludes produced the only effect that gave success, and were the supreme effort of contemporary dramatic art; plot there was none, only a multiplicity of variety and scene. Rabelais tells us of Villon's efforts in this direction, and draws several lively pictures of the Comédies and Diableries which followed, for which last the town of Doué was particularly famous.

The " Mystery Plays," properly so called, were of very early origin, and were possibly an attempt to present to all classes a vivid enactment of sacred scenes which had not yet become public property by the agency of the printing press. The story of Daniel, or the parable of the Ten Virgins, became much more of a reality to the common people when actually thrown into life and action before their eyes, than when spelt out with difficulty from a rare manuscript, or misunderstood from the readings of some ecclesiastic in a foreign tongue. The custom thus originated lasted long after the presses of Faust and Gutenberg had popularised literature, sacred and profane, even after the movement of the Reformation had given a French Bible to the nation, and a Marot had produced his metrical version of the Psalms. But it was not from these that the drama of Molière drew its inspiration, nor from what is known as the " profane mystery," a kind of horrible parody upon Biblical subjects, but from the " moralities," the farces, and " soties," which had their origin in the innate dramatic instinct of the French people. The farce of Patelin,[1] for instance, was a very fair reproduction of the manners of the time,

[1] The farce of Patelin was very celebrated in the sixteenth century. It was composed between 1467 and 1470. For a criticism and analysis of it see Estienne Pasquier, *Recherches*, viii. 59, p. 780 (ed. 1621).

and as such it has been already quoted, and indeed so great a hold did these representations gain upon the public mind that we find such a piece as the *Farce du Pasté et de la Tarte* retaining its popularity until the days of Louis XIV., when Molière's company took the place of the Comédiens de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne. These last "Comédiens" were a survival of the old "Confrèrie de la Passion," a society of actors who had almost superseded the old "Basoche" and the "Enfants sans Souci," by an audacious mixture of the old and established Scriptural subjects with grotesque or obscene incidents which appealed to the grossness of the time, while it reflected the chaotic nature of the religious sympathies and beliefs of men in the thick darkness of the Middle Ages. There is in them the same ghastly mockery of holiness which disgusts us chiefly in the character of Louis XI., as it will sicken us later on in Henry III. The hideous cloak of superstition and idolatry which Louis called religion, still more perhaps the heartless cruelty of the man in private as well as in public relations with his fellow-man, all this remained far too clear for us to be long doubtful about the sincerity of the joy of Amboise when the old cry was heard again, "Le Roi est mort, vive le roi."

For some time the Dauphin had been living at

Amboise in idleness and seclusion; but the accounts of his father's neglect are not to be too hastily believed. Louis has quite enough to answer for without this being laid to his charge unnecessarily, and the testimony of Commines on the point is to be received with caution. The scene at the castle in September 1482, when Louis, just returned from a pilgrimage to Saint Claude, and feeling that his end was near, solemnly invested his son with the royal authority, would seem to show that his neglect of Charles has been somewhat exaggerated; but there is other evidence, too: the letters of the King to Bourré, who had charge of the Prince, are not those of a careless and indifferent father, nor would a man whose ideas of classical education were limited by the sentence "Qui nescit dissimulare nescit regnare" so highly reward Étienne de Vesc, the other tutor. Such a maxim was at any rate not the one by which the new King guided his policy; nor was his reading, even before he came to the throne, limited to the romances of chivalry by which his mother's notions of literature were bounded. The *Grandes Chroniques de France* and the *Rosier des Guerres* of Pierre Choinet were in his hands soon after 1482, and this ignorant prince, who was supposed to have been suppressed for fear of opposition to his father's power, astonishes Europe by an

invasion of Italy as soon as the disturbances of his own nobles within the kingdom had been quelled.

It is well known, too, that his was a mind which developed slowly and would bear but little pressure. Claude de Seyssel and Commines give the wrong reason for the education prescribed for Charles by his father. From Nicole Gilles we find what is far nearer the truth, that the life of the heir to the throne was rightly considered to be of more importance than the acuteness of his intellect, and that his strength of body was encouraged in preference to the risk of enfeebling a naturally weak constitution by the enforcement of displeasing studies. "Sa mauvaise nourriture," as Commines calls it, "n'endommagea en rien son généreux naturel brave courage qui était né avec lui," and when he was strong enough to learn he had the will to study. The number of classical books which he brought back from Italy would alone prove that his tastes in this direction had not been neglected; and though inevitably much was wanting in his general education, yet the sound advice and firm policy of the Regent, Anne de Beaujeu, did much to steer him safely through the first troubled years of the reign that he began when still a child.

The young King's return from his campaign in Italy, unpleasant enough in its inevitable ill-success,

was still further saddened by the death of his son at three years of age, "bel enfant," says Commines, "et audacieux en parole; et ne craignant point les choses que les autres enfants ont accoutumé de craindre." This boy was buried with his brother in the Church of St. Martin at Tours, and their tomb is still one of the most beautiful ornaments of the cathedral to which it was removed after the destruction of the older church.

The two great towers of Amboise with the inclined planes of brickwork, which wind upwards in the midst instead of staircases, were the result of the work which Charles set on foot as a distraction to his grief. These strange ascents had been partially restored by the Comte de Paris, the present owner of Amboise, before his exile stopped the work of repairing the château, and it is still possible to imagine the "charrettes, mullets, et litières," of which Du Bellay speaks, mounting from the low ground to the chambers above, or the Emperor Charles V., in later years, riding up with his royal host, Francis I., always fond of display, amid such a blaze of flambeaux "that a man might see as clearly as at mid-day."

These great towers and the exquisite little chapel were the work of the "excellent sculptors and artists from Naples" who, as Commines tells us,

were brought back with the spoils of the Italian wars; for the young King "never thought of death" but only of collecting round him "all the beautiful things which he had seen and which had given him pleasure, from France or Italy or Flanders;" [1] but death came upon him suddenly. At the end of a garden walk, fringed with a mossy grove of limes that rises from the river bank, is the little doorway through which Charles VIII. was passing when he hit his head, never a very strong one, against the low stone arch, and died a few hours afterwards. The castle had been fortified before his time; he left it beautiful as well, and the traces of his work are those which are most striking at the present day.[2]

[1] In October and November 1493 he shows off the new buildings with much pride to the Italian ambassadors. See Desjardins, *Négot. Diplom. de la F. avec la Toscane,* i. 340.

[2] Baron de Cosson has been kind enough to send me a list of the arms and armour in the Château of Amboise at 1499. It will be noticed that the ownership of King Arthur is traceable in the entry referring to Lancelot's sword. "Une dague en manchée de licorne la poignée de cristalin nommée la dague Saint-Charlemagne. Une espée en manchée de fer, garnie en façon de clef nommée l'espée de Lancelot du Lac, et dit-on qu'elle est fée. Une espée d'armes garnie de fouet blanc et au pommeau une Nostre Dame d'un costé et un souleil de l'autre, nommée l'espée du Roy Charles VII., appellée la bien-aimée. Une espée d'armes, la poignée couverte de fouet blanc et au pommeau a une Nostre Dame d'un costé et un S. Michel de l'autre, nommée l'espée du Roy de France qui fist armes

The new reign began with the disgraceful process of divorce against the first wife of the King, Jeanne de France; in the Church of St. Denys it was confirmed publicly, and the papal sanction read. The indignation which must have been felt pretty generally throughout France was particularly outspoken in Amboise, where the prelates and theologians of the Court were pointed out in the streets as the " Herods and Pilates " of their time.

It may have been as much a feeling of shame as a movement prompted by more delicate associations, which prevented Louis from entering the town with Anne de Bretagne when she made her second entry as Queen of France. Amboise was,

contre un géan à Paris et le conquist." Various other swords are mentioned, such as the Papal one given with the arms of Pope Calixtus; the war-sword of Charles VIII.; a sword given by the King of Scotland to Louis XI. when he married Madame la Dauphine; the sword of Louis XI., " nommée la belle espée du Roy Louis qu'il avoit à la conqueste qu'il fist premier sur les Suysses, nommée Estrefuse "; a sword " nommée l'espée de Philippe le Bel "; another " nommée l'espée du Roy Jehan "; with others belonging to Louis XI. and Charles VIII. The sword called " La Victoire " seems to have been made for Charles VI. in 1383 (see V. Gay, *Glossaire Archéologique*, Paris, 1887, p. 686). Amongst the armour was, " Une brigandine de Tallebot couverte de veloux noir tout usée, et sa salade noire couverte d'un houx de broderie fait sur veloux, tout usée "; also, " Harnoys de la pucelle, garny de gardebras, d'une paire de mitons, et d'un abillement de teste où il y a ung gorgeray de maille, le bort doré, le dedans garny de satin cramoisy, doublé de mesme." There was besides " une hache à une main qui fut au Roy Saint Loys " (see V. Gay, p. 65).

as usual, ready with its Mystery Play to welcome the new Queen—this time a history of Julius Cæsar —but the demonstration of loyal and dramatic fervour was suppressed.

At this time the Maréchal de Gié, whom we have met before, begins to take a prominent position. He had accompanied the King on the first expedition to Italy, and after his return had been moved, by a sudden accident to Louis, to think of the marriage of his daughter Claude. Unfortunately Anne de Bretagne, never a great friend to the Maréchal, had thought about it too, and hostilities began between them, on the Queen's side " une guerre de coups d'épingle," on the Maréchal's nothing save a profound and apparent contempt.[1] De Gié was now given the care of Louise de Savoie, Comtesse d'Angoulême, and her children, with a small force of men-at-arms in the Castle of Amboise, and by his command in Angers, and his connections in Saumur and Tours, he was practically master of the Loire—a fact which was peculiarly galling to the Queen, for by way of trying, like a true Breton, to guarantee her eventual independence, she was in the habit of sending jewels and other valuables down the river to safe-keeping at

[1] See *Procédures Politiques du règne de Louis XII.*, M. de Maulde, Ecole des Chartes.

Nantes; but this, though it was to appear again later on, was not the chief grievance of which the Queen complained, for De Gié had a far higher task: he was holding the future Francis I. against all other possible heirs whom Anne de Bretagne might produce by marrying her daughter to a foreign prince, and his position was made all the more difficult by the narrow and suspicious nature of Louise de Savoie.

But between De Gié and D'Amboise was now divided the chief power in the kingdom, and he soon began definite negotiations for the marriage of Francis with the Princess Claude. Anne de Bretagne, as we have seen, was actually desirous of giving her daughter to the boy who was to become Charles V., and the value of De Gié's authority in French politics may be estimated by this fact alone of spirited opposition to so grave an error.

Nor were his energies exhausted upon this one struggle. He found time to send opportune help to the French army that was struggling in Italy, and, though fifty-two years of age, to marry Marguerite d'Armagnac and obtain the title of Duc de Nemours. It was owing to his exertions, too, that a National Infantry, some twenty thousand strong, was raised, and when the Cardinal returned in all the disappointment of his lost opportunities at

Rome, De Gié's position of confident authority in France added one more sting to the annoyance of his own failures in Italy.

But the Maréchal's well-merited good fortune did not last. His son's wife and his own died within a short interval, and in January 1504 the King fell suddenly very ill, and was sent to Blois to recover in the healing influence of his natal air, as Francis was sent later on to Cognac, in accordance with a medical superstition for long prevalent in France.

It now became more than ever important to urge on the marriage of Francis and the princess, and in the opposition that ensued Cardinal d'Amboise joined the Queen against De Gié and resolved upon his fall, making various accusations as to his unwarrantable interference with the Queen's movements; indeed, just at this time the Maréchal had seized two boats laden with her furniture and jewels between Saumur and Nantes, which were on their way westwards to provide a comfortable provision for the widowhood which then seemed near at hand. Anne was furious, and her anger was increased by the betrothal of Francis. She at once instituted proceedings against De Gié, but his character and probity were too well known for her to succeed. But the Queen would not rest without her ven-

geance, got up another trial, and condemned him at the Court of Toulouse, while D'Amboise looked on, and "let justice take its course."

De Gié, banished from the Court and heavily fined, went into an honourable retirement at his Château of Verger, which recalled in many details the home at Blois of the King he had served so well. The process which the Queen instituted against him proved his justification for all time, and purified his memory for ever from the calumnies of the Court. He was too honest and too straightforward for those with whom he had to come in contact, and, like Semblançay afterwards, he had to pay the penalty for his integrity. He reorganised the army, established a sound defence on the frontiers, and invariably opposed the foreign expeditions which wasted to so little purpose the resources of the kingdom; it is in this that his greatness consists, for perhaps he was alone of his time in realising that the strength of France lay in her natural boundaries, and alone in devoting his energies to the unity and solidification of his country.

In 1507, at the engagement of the Princess Claude to Francis, then the probable heir to the throne, the enthusiastic citizens of Amboise would not be denied their usual tribute of congratulation, and the *Mystère de la Passion* was presented with

so much magnificence that the town accounts were in hopeless confusion for a long while afterwards.

Francis I., whose long nose and slumbrous eye look down from the walls of so many châteaux of Touraine, has been at Amboise for some time. The reader has already been introduced to him in later life, and to his sister, the learned Marguerite, who in 1501, at the age of nine, was watching her brother, two years younger than herself, playing with little Fleurange, who had just made his youthful début at Blois, and had been sent on by the King to keep the young duke company. They played a rough kind of tennis in the level spaces of the garden, using a racquet weighted with lead to give more force to their blows, or shot with bows and arrows at a white mark fixed to a door, or, as the prince's strength grew with his age, a new game is introduced from Italy, played with enormous hollow balls that were struck with a queer instrument of metal covered with felt and tied on the arm from wrist to elbow with leathern straps; and now, finding that four make a better game than two, Francis takes young Anne de Montmorency to try conclusions with Brion Chabot, who is partner to Robert de la Marche.

Two of the players were to turn their mimic rivalry into grim earnest later on, and all were to

be famous; perhaps they felt that even now, for when the game is over, the little snub nose of "Le Camus" may be seen in close proximity to the lengthy face of Francis, asking the duke to make him Constable some day, when he shall have come into his kingdom; while Chabot, not to be left behind, begs to be Admiral of France in that glorious future when they shall help together to regenerate the world. Both had their wish, and Montmorency, the Constable, lived sternly through the next four reigns, to die fighting in 1567 at the battle of St. Denis.

With these boys there are others, too, who shall be famous in their deaths. Gaston de Foix, who died so young at Ravenna; Bonnivet, who was to fall in love with the fair sister of his playmate and die upon the field of Pavia, where Fleurange, too, was taken prisoner, and used his hours of solitude to write his *Mémoires*. And watching her son with eyes as eager as her daughter's, and even more ambitious, is Louise de Savoie, whose short journal, full of this idolised son, gives us many details of his life at Amboise.

In January 1501 she writes: "About two in the afternoon my king, my lord, my Cæsar, and my son, was run away with across the fields near Amboise by a pony which the Maréchal de Gié had given

him; the danger was so great that those present considered it past remedy. Nevertheless God, the protector of widow women and the defence of orphans, foreseeing the future, would not abandon me, knowing that had ill fortune robbed me suddenly of my love I should have been too unhappy."

This journal, which is the barest chronicle of facts and dates, the narrow record of a mean character, never rises into pretentious diction but when speaking of this boy on whom her whole soul rested. The strong young prince was soon to leave the castle, where his impetuous nature had often frightened others besides his anxious mother. One day he let a wild boar loose within the court, which rushed madly at the flying servants, and finally made for the great staircase, where Francis was waiting and killed it with his dagger.

Soon after, Louise writes: "Mon fils partit d'Amboise pour être homme de cour et me laissa toute seule"—there is all a mother's pathos in these short words; but the diary still contains references to his visits to the castle; once when on his way to Guienne against the Spaniards in 1512, and three years later when he rides over from Chaumont with a thorn in his leg, "from which," writes his mother, "he had much pain, and I too."

Then after some terrible sidelights upon the jeal-

ousy between the Savoyard and the Breton woman, comes "the triumphant entry" of the death of Louis XII. without male issue, and the coronation of her beloved Francis. Between the births of his daughters, Louise and Charlotte, at Amboise, the tidings of Marignano came to Louise. "The fight began," she writes, "at five in the afternoon and lasted all the night; that very day (13th September 1515) I left Amboise to go on foot to Notre Dame de Fontaines, to recommend to her him whom I love more than myself, my glorious son and my victorious Cæsar, who has subdued the Helvetians." On the same day there was seen in Flanders a great comet shaped like a lance; the beginning of the reign of Francis was crowned with military glory; we have already seen how it ended.

Within the shadow of the lime trees on the terraced garden of Amboise is a small bust of Leonardo da Vinci, for it was near here that he died. His remains are laid in the beautiful chapel at the corner of the castle court, and the romantic story of his last moments at Fontainebleau becomes the sad reality of a tombstone covering ashes mostly unknown and certainly indistinguishable; "amongst which," as the epitaph painfully records, "are supposed to be the remains of Leonardo da Vinci." He had been brought to Paris a weak old man of

sixty-five, by Francis, in pursuance of a certain fixed artistic policy, to which it may be noticed this forgotten and uncertain grave does but little credit.

To Francis I., rightly or wrongly, is given the glory of having naturalised in France the arts of Italy; to him is due the architecture built for ease and charm which turned the fortress into a beautiful habitation, which changed Chambord from a feudal stronghold to a country seat, and which left its traces at Amboise, as it did at Chaumont and at Blois. He found in France the highest and most beautiful expression of the work of "the great unnamed race of master-masons;" he found the traditions of a national school of painting, the work of Fouquet and the Clouets, but for these he cared not;[1] for him the only schools were those of Rome and Florence, and though by encouraging their

[1] For an account of Fouquet, see chapter on the Dukes of Orleans. Jehan Clouet, called Janet, was Court painter to Francis I. after 1518, and died in 1540. His painting is notable for its simplicity and delicacy. His best known works are the equestrian portrait of Francis (on parchment), in the Uffizi, and the half-length on panel at Versailles. There is also a portrait of the Princess Marguerite in the Royal Institution by him, though it is usually attributed to Holbein, with whom the school of the Clouets was contemporary. There are other fine examples of their work at Hampton Court, notably the Dauphin Francis. The most famous of the family, François Clouet, was born at Tours, and the castles on the Loire contain several examples of his work.

imitation he weakened the vital sincerity of French art, yet from his first exercise of royal power the consistency always somewhat lacking in his politics was shown clearly and firmly in his taste for art.

Only the pupils of the other great masters were to be had from Italy ; so Giovanni Battista Rosso (known in France as Maître le Roux), who had studied under Michael Angelo, came to Paris for a sufficient inducement. The Raphaelesque figures of Francesco Primaticcio soon presented a contrast to Le Roux's more vigorous handling, and the quarrel between the two artists, which only ended in Rosso's suicide, was still more embittered by the arrival of the masterly and impudent Benvenuto Cellini, whose extraordinary autobiography gives many piquant details of his stay in France.

But while the King was employing his Italians upon Fontainebleau, Jean Bullant was already at work, who built Ecouen for the Constable,[1] and

[1] Jean Bullant was the last of the old master-masons and the first of the great architects of France. Of the palace he began in Paris for Catherine de Medicis nothing is left but a large Doric column, now attached to the modern Halle aux Blés. The Queen used to climb up its staircase to consult the stars. With Bullant at Ecouen was Goujon, who began life as a simple mason under Maître Quesnel, and began a long friendship with Pierre Lescot by working with him at the Rood Screen of St. Germain l'Auxerrois. His best works are the Diane Chasseresse, and the statues of the Hôtel Carnavalet.

Goujon, who was to carve the Diane Chasseresse for Anet. The truly original art of these men, some of whom had need of help, some of whom, like Lescot, the Sieur de Clagny, were strong enough to stand alone, went on its own way untouched by the foreign influences which Francis brought from Italy, or only using the best of the ideas which the foreign workmen brought them.

The whole question of the position of Francis in the movement of the Renaissance is far beyond the scope of these chapters, but three things at least seemed clear to us as we stood by the tomb of Leonardo at Amboise—that there was a strong national school of sculpture, of painting, and of architecture in France that deserved more encouragement from the French King than it obtained; that "the first pure dream" of art from Italy by which the spirits of this older school were touched, was worth far more both to the nation and to the interests of art than the decadence of the Italy which Francis brought to Paris; and finally, that if the King so far neglected the greatest of all those whom he invited to his Court, the most accomplished and most varied intellect the world has ever seen, he can have had but little true appreciation of the foreign talent for whose sake he neglected the vigorous schools of art and industry at home.

Amboise—The Conspiracy

CHAPTER XVI

AMBOISE—THE CONSPIRACY

"Ne presche plus en France une Évangile armée,
Un Christ empistolé, tout noirci de fumée,
Protant un morion en teste, et dans sa main
Un large coutelas rouge de sang humain."

Diane de Poitiers does not seem to have cared much for Amboise, so the reign of Henry II. does not come into its story, but with the boy who followed Henry to the throne begins the most terrible scene in the history of the castle.

In November 1559, Marie Stuart was riding into Amboise with her young husband, Francis II., barely fifteen years of age, beneath the bright crisp sunshine of a winter in Touraine, through gaily-decorated streets filled with a crowd of men and women cheering the new King and his northern bride. Five months afterwards Marie Stuart rode through the same streets again, with none to watch her but armed men, the doors and windows of the houses closed, and only here and there a gibbet or a corpse by way of decoration. For the little town had suddenly become the centre of a widespread

movement—a movement which had begun many years ago, and gradually gathered force almost unseen and unappreciated by the Court, until at last it broke suddenly and terribly into view with the conspiracy of Amboise.

The strangely new doctrines of Calvin had begun to penetrate Touraine soon after Francis I. had brought the Italian Renaissance into France, and the queer cave dwellings in the rocks of St. Georges and Rochecorbon already concealed hermits with tendencies too revolutionary and unorthodox to be sheltered in ordinary resting-places. But the full consequences of the spread of the new doctrines did not become apparent until later, and it was not until the accession of a mere child to the throne that the feeling to which those doctrines had given rise joined itself to a more definite political grievance, and became the expression of an actual party in the kingdom.

At the death of Henry II. the influence of the Guises became paramount at Court, and it was the policy of Catherine to join their party and to secure the additional support of the Constable Montmorency, whose nephews, Admiral Coligny and his brother D'Andelot, were in the opposition with the Bourbon princes, Antoine, King of Navarre, the Prince of Condé, and the Cardinal de Bourbon. It

was therefore necessary, if the Guises were to have a free hand, that the ground should be first cleared, and Catherine was persuaded to send the Bourbon princes and their following away from Court. At the same time began fresh religious persecutions, with a vigour encouraged by the promises which the Cardinal de Guise had made to his foreign allies, to root out once and for all the troublesome heresy from France. Already the persecutions had developed into a reign of terror which began with half-drunken slaughters in the Rue Marais and lasted all the winter, and the iniquitous trial of Du Bourg at length frightened the Huguenots into writing for help to the Bourbons; the opposition in politics was thus brought into relations with the opposition in religion, and gained in strength from its new ally.

Catherine had characteristically promised help to the Huguenots, without the faintest intention of giving any assistance, and had even gone so far as to tell Coligny that she would see and listen to a clergyman of the reformed religion whom he would send her. As a matter of fact she was completely in the power of the Guises, and it was against this power, which was already felt and resented in wider circles than those immediately about the Court, that the first blow was to be aimed, for the greatest indignation had been aroused throughout the king-

dom by their flat refusal to summon the States-General.

Meanwhile the King suddenly grew weaker than ever, and was ordered by his physician to spend the winter and spring at Blois, where terrible rumours began to be circulated as to the methods to be employed for his recovery.[1] During his illness occurred the mysterious murder of the President, Antoine Minard, in Paris. He was a partisan of the Guises, and they at once made swift reprisals. Du Bourg was condemned and burnt at St. Jean en Grève.[2] The Huguenots could wait no longer, and they found themselves irreparably joined to the great party of the "Discontented," which now contained three main elements,—the first imbued with an honest zeal for their religion, and with a thoroughly sincere devotion to their country and their King; the second, mainly composed of the more ambitious spirits eager for some change from the present miserable state of affairs; the third, eager for vengeance on the Guises, both for public and for private reasons.

[1] He was supposed, absolutely without foundation, to be desirous of bathing in the blood of infants to remove the blotches on his skin. See the *Mémoires* of Louis Regnier de la Planche, from whom in the main the following account of the conspiracy is taken, in combination with the testimony of Vieilleville and of De Castelnau.

[2] See Bib. Nat. Estampes, *Hist. de Fr.* reg. Q. b. 19.

Moved by these various feelings the Huguenot party went for counsel to their natural leaders, the Princes of the Blood, "qui sont nés en tel cas légitimes magistrats," and their cause was at once taken up by Louis de Bourbon, Prince of Condé. The gist of their demands was, to oust the usurpers, to get hold of the persons of François, Duc de Guise, and of his brother Charles, the Cardinal, and then to try them for their many sins before the States-General, which would be immediately summoned.

The difficulty lay in the first move; but a man was forthcoming at the crisis, "a certain gentleman from Perigord, Godefroy de Barry, Seigneur de la Renaudie," who at once proffered his services, and bent so keenly to his task that in a few weeks a great assembly of nobles was being secretly held at Nantes to discuss the plan of action. All treasonable attempts against the King himself were from the first distinctly repudiated. The first resolution of the assembly ran as follows: "Protestation faite par *le chef* et tous ceux du conseil, de n'attenter aucune chose contre la majesté du roi, princes du sang, ni État légitime du royaume."

"Le chef" was of course Condé, and his name of "chef muet" had a distinct meaning in the plan of the conspiracy: to his party he was a "leader," to the Court he was "dumb"; and it was with the

distinct approval of his party that he went into Amboise later on, to give them assistance from within, when it should be needed, without arousing the suspicion of the Guises. Neither he nor his friends imagined the terrible position in which he was to be placed.

The council at Nantes further resolved that on the 10th of March (1560) the Guises should be seized at Blois. De Castelnau was given command of the Gascons, and captains were similarly appointed for the levies that were to come from every province.[1]

The whole project was very properly condemned by the far-seeing ministers of Geneva as being impossible without treasonable practices. The King, if he was to be taken out of the power of the Guises, must presumably be handed over to Condé; but the remonstrance came too late. The movement went on and grew in strength, people came together with the idea of presenting their grievances to the King, in all confidence marching without much mystery and by every road to the Loire, many without knowing of the plot of La Renaudie or ever having heard his name: this is most clearly seen from the fact that his death did not stop the others gathering from

[1] For a list of the Captains and Provinces in the plan of the Conspiracy, see Mezeray, iii. 18 (fol. 1685).

all round, intent on getting audience from the King in spite of the hated Guises, and the swift executions did not stay the tide that kept pouring in from the woods only to be mercilessly killed.

While making his preparations in Paris La Renaudie lodged with one Des Avenelles, who was supposed to be a Huguenot, but who disclosed as much as he could discover of the whole affair to the secretaries of Duke Francis and the Cardinal. The Guises were thunderstruck at the extent of the conspiracy; they had always suspected the Châtillons, but they could not understand this widespread movement. Their ally, the King of Spain, was far better informed. Coligny, D'Andelot, and Condé had all been in communication with Elizabeth, and Anabaptists, Calvinists, and Huguenots in England, in Switzerland, and in Germany, were all vaguely conscious that some attempt was to be made.

In fear for the King's safety—for they realised as well as their opponents the importance of the royal person—they hurriedly moved the Court from Blois to what was considered the far safer fortress of Amboise, where, as a matter of fact, the castle was almost without troops or stores, where the town was full of Protestants, and Tours hard by was hostile or indifferent. With three hundred resolute

men La Renaudie might have succeeded yet, but he was fettered by advices from Nantes, fatally hindered by the number of his accomplices, and ended by waiting too long for the decisive stroke.

The Guises had at any rate the merit of swiftly realising the emergency of the situation. They sent out messengers in every direction calling for help; they did their utmost to arouse popular hatred against the Huguenots by numberless accusations fabricated with the utmost disregard for truth; finally, they tried to get hold of the chiefs of the conspiracy.

The Admiral and his brother came immediately they were summoned, and the Guises got nothing but very plain speaking from Coligny. "They were disgusted," said he, "that the affairs of the State should be wholly managed by persons whom men considered to be foreigners; what was needed was a good edict in clear, significant, and unambiguous terms that both parties should be bound to keep."

Condé came in too; not seduced this time by the attractions of the "escadron volant," though Catherine doubtless put him down among her many victims, but of his own free will, to brave out the Guises and call an assembly of the States-General when the plot was over.

The day for the attempt had been fixed afresh for the 16th of March. Young Ferrières was to go first to the castle with some hundred men, who were to be concealed hard by, La Renaudie and De Castelnau would follow with the rest from Noizay, which was the new headquarters now the Court had moved; a signal would be given from the roof of the castle that all was going well within, and then "le chef muet" was to speak.

But most unfortunately a certain Captain Lignières had broken his oath and betrayed all to Catherine de Medicis. The Guises then roused the country on the plea of an attack against the King's safety, and affairs began to come to a crisis. Soon afterwards the Comte de Lancerre, with a few of the garrison from Amboise, met De Castelnau in the woods and attempted to arrest him, but astonished at the numbers who suddenly appeared to his assistance, they retired precipitately and rushed back to Amboise shouting, "Treason, help, in the King's name!" No one looked out except a baker, who shut his door again immediately, and De Castelnau might have easily secured the town by a sudden attack. The Court was alarmed by the discouraging news of thirty captains and five hundred cavalry waiting with a good company of men-at-arms at Noizay, and Vieilleville was asked to represent to

them the baseness of their conduct, and offer a free pass to the presence of the King.

Nothing would do, however, but the word of a prince of the blood, so the Duc de Nemours appeared, and "having sworn on the faith of a prince, on his honour, and on the damnation of his soul, and having further signed with his own hand his name, Jacques de Savoie," he led De Castelnau and the Huguenot deputies into the castle, "all considering it a great honour and advantage to have thus free access to the King."

The inevitable result followed. They were seized, thrown into prison, and "tormented with hellish cruelty." Chancellor Oliver was forced to explain the nature of a royal promise, and the executions began, much to the disgust of the Duc de Nemours whose word had so cynically been disregarded. Vieilleville, well pleased to be out of so discreditable an affair, was sent to Orleans.

Meanwhile La Renaudie, hearing of the danger from a distance, sent help; his men were all seized by the Guises' cavalry. By bands of tens, fifteens, and twenties they were tied to the horses' tails and dragged in to death; the better-dressed were killed at once, stripped, and left dead in the ditches. The Guises felt that they were not safe yet, and they resolved to play desperately "for double or quits."

But on the 18th they began to feel more assured, for La Renaudie himself, whose bravery deserved a better fate, was shot by a servant of the Baron de Pardeillan, whom he had killed at the same moment in a chance encounter in the woods. His body was carried to the town and hung upon the bridge with a placard stuck upon the neck.

But the Guises still chafed at the sight of their enemies within the castle. They strove to make out that the conspiracy was not against themselves at all, but that their name was used merely as a pretext to abolish monarchy, to reduce France to a republic of Cantons, to kill off the nobility and establish Communism. To try and prove this they made fruitless efforts to collect evidence of treason from Navarre, or from La Bigne, the servant of La Renaudie; but they could elicit no more than the truth, "that no treason against the King was meant." Their efforts succeeded better with the lower classes: all the scoundrels of the neighborhood rallied to the powerful Guises. Some two thousand idlers, muleteers, grooms, carters, lackeys, ruffians of all kinds, flocked to the rich plunder of arms and clothing like kites upon the carrion: many peaceable merchants were robbed of their clothing and all that they possessed, and murdered as heretics if they offered to resist.

The slaughter of the wretched Huguenots went on bravely throughout all the forest paths, and "many others," says De Castelnau, "were taken and hanged to serve as a precedent in so strange a case; a certain number, too, were strung up to the battlements of the castle to astonish the rest." For a month this went on, till every cut-throat in the Guises' pay had made his fortune, for the country swarmed with men who waited to be killed, or citizens like those of Toulouse, who refused to move before they had spoken with the King, and were only cured of their importunity by being hanged from the castle windows.

The young King tried to mitigate the severity of the Guises, exclaiming in horror "at the punishment of so many of my poor subjects," but it was no use. Stronger heads than his had given way in the crisis. The miserable Chancellor Olivier, forced against his will to connive at all this blood-shedding, shrieked aloud as he saw the dripping hands of one of the Protestant noblemen kneeling at the block in fervent prayer. He was carried to his bed mortally sick, where the Cardinal de Guise visited him to check this strange weakness of an officer of the Court. "Ha! mauldit Cardinal," cried Olivier, "tu te dampnes et nous fais aussi tous damnez."—"My son," said the prelate, "resist the Evil One."

—" So he has come at last! " cried the other with a hideous laugh, as he turned his back upon De Guise and died.

The scene at the castle at this time was a terrible one. The passages and courts were thronged with men and women crying for justice or for mercy; whole families were to be seen in despair at the approaching death of a father or a husband; but no energy, no bribery, no intercession availed to stay the vengeance of the Guises; if their cruelty was unparalleled, their precautions were infinite as well. The most brilliant example of their stage management was yet to come.

Beneath the walls of the castle, in full view of that iron balcony whose bars rusted blood-red still guard the windows looking down upon the Loire, the scaffolds had been raised with great magnificence: all round the square in which they stood were lines of planked seats rising in tiers from the ground, and filled with an expectant crowd; the night before, thousands of people had slept in the fields around the town to avoid being late for the sight of the morrow, the very roofs were black with sightseers, and a merry barter was carried on, by the fortunate owners of houses looking out upon the square, for spaces at the windows which gave a good view of the block and the scaffold draped in black.

After mass in the castle and the various churches of the town, the lines of the Scottish guard, who had been holding the ground since daybreak, were broken by the first of the Huguenot nobles reserved for execution before the royal presence. All those who could walked bravely forward, speaking little save to refuse the help of the Catholic monks who pressed the hated faith upon them to the last; many, with faces white and drawn and reddening bandages about their feet, were helped by their friends towards the place of execution; these were they who had been tortured beforehand in the dungeons of Amboise.

The whispers of the crowd were suddenly hushed, for from the mouths of all the prisoners rose the words of the Psalm, which Clement Marot had not long ago translated, "God be merciful unto us and bless us; and show us the light of His countenance," [1] and as the crowd heard the last notes die away and followed the singers' eyes with theirs, they saw a quick movement of all the prisoners' heads; the Prince of Condé had appeared upon the

[1] "Dieu nous soit doux et favorable
Nous bénissant par sa bonté,
Et de son visage adorable
Nous fasse luire la clarté.

"Dieu, tu nous as mis à l'épreuve
Et tu nous as examinés,

General View of Amboise
Showing the Gallery from which the Court watched the Execution of the Huguenots

gallery above between the young Queen, Marie Stuart, and the Duke of Orleans, and all the gentlemen, his followers who were about to die, had saluted the prince, their "chef muet." He was brave enough to give them the last satisfaction of a dangerous farewell.

The Court had just left the dining-hall, and had been all led out, men, women and children, by the Duke of Guise to see this last and finest execution of the rebels. The ladies shuddered at first, but Catherine de Medicis was there to show them the conduct proper to a loyal friend of the little trembling King, who would have turned his head away but did not dare. Behind the two Queens stood the Papal Nuncio, below was the Lieutenant-General, with the marshals and their suite on horseback. The whole Court was there, as ready, apparently, for the executions of Amboise as they had been for the fêtes just finished in the hall at Blois. But not all, we may at least believe, were there of their own will: if it be too true that the young Marie Stuart stood and watched this horrible execution, she was at

Comme l'argent que l'on épreuve
Par le feu tu nous as affinés.

"Tu nous as fait entrer et joindre
Aux pièges de nos ennemis,
Tu nous as fait les reins astreindre
Des filets où tu nous as mis."

least no more willing to look on than was the Prince of Condé; both were forced by the iron will of the Guises and the policy of the Queen-mother.

The whispers of the crowd were checked again, by a sign from the Duc de Guise, and in the silence that followed the first name was called out,[1] and the first head fell—and still the Psalm that had begun again was chanted by the knot of prisoners, and grew fainter as their number lessened and the axe kept falling fast. The young King grew pale at the sight of so much blood, the very headsman wearied of his task, for the axe's edge was dull and blunted. Condé could keep still no longer. "Ah, what an easy task," he cried, "for foreigners to seize on France after the death of so many honourable men!" The Guises never forgot the words, and hated the Prince until his death.

The very crowd beneath them was murmuring at the sight of such unflinching courage, and as the last victim mounted to the block with the lines of the old Psalm upon his lips, there was a universal movement which even the agitated King could not misunderstand—but it was too late; the Cardinal had made the fatal sign and the last head fell with the rest.[2]

[1] Jean Louis Alberic, Baron de Raunay.

[2] Michel Jean Louis, Baron de Castelnau Chalosse. The

The Guises were fairly maddened with blood; gallows and scaffold were not enough for them; heads were stuck upon the railings of the castle, the markets were befouled with the dead bodies, the Loire rolled thick with human corpses, the château and the woods were crammed with dead: a man was brought in while De Guise was breakfasting, hung by the neck to the window-bars, and sent with a stab to join the others.

The whole place reeked like a shambles, so that the Queen-mother, persuaded by the softer spirits of her Court, left Amboise at last, and riding through the woods still filled with ghastly traces of the massacre, carried off the young King and Queen to forget the heretics in fresh riots and debauchery at Chenonceaux.[1]

Only one among the Guises had shown any com-

brother of this man had already laid down his life for the royal family at Amboise. One night when Francis I. and all his Court were in bed, the Duke of Orleans roused his companions and made a wanton assault on the band of lacqueys who were on guard at the bridge; the duke would have been killed in the scuffle had not M. de Castelnau rushed in, received the blow, and died.

[1] "À huit ans et demi le père mena son fils (Agrippa d'Aubigné) à Paris, et en passant par Amboise un jour de foire, il veit les testes de ses compagnons d'Amboise encore recognoissables sur un bout de potence, et fut tellement esmu, qu'entre sept ou huit milles personnes, il s'écria—*Ils ont descapité la France les bourreaux.*"—*Œuvres Complètes de d'Aubigné,* ed. Réaume et de Causade, p. 67.

passion for the martyrs, Anne d'Este, the daughter of Renée de France and the Duke of Ferrara, and mother of Madame de Montpensier and Henri le Balafré. She was at first instinctively hostile to the Florentine who had been so unexpectedly raised to the throne of France, but she ended in being weakened by her influence, and by the strength of the family into which she had married. But the Duke Francis could not completely change the gentle nature of his wife which she inherited from the princess her mother. "This is a piteous tragedy," she cried to Catherine de Medicis, who noticed her faltering at the sight of the executions; "some great misfortune will surely fall upon our house in vengeance for it." Her husband rated her soundly for her weakness. The horrible scenes of the massacre of Vassy were yet to come, and pass before her very eyes without a possibility of hindrance, Catherine de Medicis and the Guises were to have yet another wholesale slaughter, for Amboise and Vassy were not enough, and the night of St. Bartholomew was needed to satisfy them; but the assassin Poltrot justified her fears, and after her husband had been murdered, her son Henry paid the penalty for the sins of his house in the chamber of the King at Blois.

And at this time the position of this extraordi-

nary family might well have pardoned them their pride. The Duke Francis had gained an easy military reputation at Metz and Calais, his father before him had served his country in the field and made every use of the position which his successes gave him, his mother was Antoinette de Bourbon, the great-aunt of Henry IV., his niece, Marie Stuart, was on the throne of France. The Cardinal, his brother, absorbed the rest of the power which Francis left untouched; he was called "the Pope across the Alps," and treated his "colleague" at Rome on a basis of equality. He was as eloquent in speech as he was learned in theology, and finally had absolutely under his control three great religious orders who throughout France and Italy worked his will without question.[1]

Little wonder that when once so terribly embarked upon a definite policy the Guises felt themselves strong enough to pursue it to the bitter end. The rank and file had been taught a sharp lesson; it remained to deal with the leaders. In their rage against the Prince of Condé, who never gave any justification for their attacks, they had even suggested to the little King that he should stab the

[1] The reputation of this family is shown by the famous story of the beggar who, as one of them passed by and gave him gold, cried, "Ah! that must be Jesus Christ or the Cardinal de Lorraine!"

Prince with his dagger while pretending to be jesting with him, and they put down his scruples to the cowardice of a half-grown child. At last they got him to summon Condé formally into the royal presence, while their officials searched his baggage for incriminating evidence—too much ashamed of their mean task to look closely, and finding absolutely nothing. The intrepid hunchbacked Prince appeared at once, and demanding a full court to hear what he had to say, boldly gave his accusers the lie, saving the honour of the Royal Family, and declared himself ready to uphold his word by single combat. This straightforward method checked the Guises for a time; the Duke was even compelled to pose as his champion, and must have looked almost as ridiculous as did his accomplice, Catherine, in the disguise of a sympathiser with the reformed religion.

Condé was allowed to go unharmed for the time, and Coligny was sent to Normandy. The Constable had managed to skilfully veil any real expression of opinion in Paris, by an ambiguous speech that committed him with neither party.

The first terror of surprise into which the Guises had been thrown when the plot was revealed to them had shown them one thing clearly, that it was impossible to put off holding the States-General. They determined to make this distasteful necessity

fit in with the rest of their schemes, and having secured the King and the Court at Orleans, and filled the town with armed men, they proceeded to entice Navarre and Condé by every means their unscrupulousness suggested, to attend the meeting of the Parliament. The princes of the blood came, in spite of every warning; and trusting themselves unhesitatingly to the protection of the King, were immediately arrested, and would have certainly been executed but for the sudden death of Francis II.

This unlooked-for *contretemps* ruined for the time being the Guises' combinations, and they were obliged to have recourse to a fresh line of policy. The famous League was formed, and the foundations laid for that long civil war which was meant to end in the supremacy of the house of Lorraine. By skilfully posing as the party of the nation, of the Bourgeoisie, and the Catholic religion, and by describing their opponents as aristocrats who favoured the doctrines of the heretics, they for a time maintained the upper hand; for, though they themselves were backed by foreign help, the opposition could, no more than the Guises, describe itself as the national party. Nor was that opposition fortunate in its leaders. Coligny alone was worthy of the cause for which he died; Navarre was fickle, useless, and untrustworthy; Condé, with all his

courage, was but little better. It was not until Jeanne d'Albret brought her son into the camp after the battle of Jarnac that a real leader appeared, and the party of the Politiques became the party of the nation. It was not until the Leaguers were seen to be the really hostile and foreign element in the struggle that in Henry of Navarre was recognised the true head of the party of France and of the throne, and the distracted kingdom at last had rest under a rule that was strong enough to crush all opposition.

The history of Amboise stops with this last tragedy, whose progress and results we have just sketched. One more conspiracy it was yet to see—the results of the murder of Le Balafré at Blois—but its details are of no more importance than the scoundrels who engaged in it.

Almost the last personage of interest whom Amboise was to receive within its walls, was Fouquet the Surintendant, who was carried here by D'Artagnan after the marvellous chase and capture which all readers of Dumas remember.

Long years after, the room from which the executions had been witnessed served as a prison for Abd-el-Kader, many of whose suite lie buried in the gardens. Small wonder that in such a dwelling even the lovely views across the valley of the Loire could

not console them for the warmer breezes of their native land.

The Franco-German war is responsible for the loss of the great "Bois de Cerf," which for so many centuries had been the wonder of the Castle. In 1577 Girolamo Lippomano saw three men lift them with difficulty from their place; and in 1644 John Evelyn writes: "In the ancient chapell (at Ambois) is a stag's head or branches, hung up by chayns, consisting of twenty brow antlers, the beame bigger than a man's middle, and of an incredible length. Indeed it is monstrous, and I cannot conceive how it should be artificial; they show also the ribs and vertebræ of the same beast; but these might be made of whalebone."

It remained for a German soldier to discover that they were a gigantic fraud in wood. Before the "rude conquerors" could get their booty to the next station, the famous horns had crumbled into a mass of worm-eaten dust.

And now this mediæval hoax has vanished, there is scarcely anything to be seen in the interior of Amboise. The energies of modern proprietors have been chiefly directed to removing the monstrosities of former occupants in the last two centuries; but the work of restoration has stopped incomplete, and we could only notice with satisfaction the efforts

begun to clear away the woodwork which had been built up to separate the old spacious apartments into more numerous and meaner rooms. But the outside of the castle brings an ample recompense. From no place we had yet seen were the views so numerous and so magnificent; for even the high keep of Loches lost all that Amboise gained in the wide sweep of the Loire that flowed past its battlements to the Bridge of Tours, whose cathedral the more keen-sighted of us could discover to the west.

Before leaving the town we strolled through the shady wall along the quay to St. Denis, a cross church with a massive central tower, in Romanesque and transitional style, with very fine detail in the carving of the pillars; and as we crossed the bridge again, the Queen of Navarre's story came into our memory of the poor muleteer who, coming home from Blois, found his wife murdered at her door, across the river. It seemed impossible to leave Amboise without some terrible impression of sudden death; for we were passing the very spot where La Renaudie's body had been lifted in the wind—a warning to all conspirators who fail.

La Reine Margot

CHAPTER XVII

LA REINE MARGOT

"Voir la cour sans voir Marguerite de Valois, c'est ne voir ni la France ni la cour."

"Behold his bed . . . threescore valiant men are about it, they all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword girt upon his thigh because of fear in the night."

From Amboise the story of Touraine moves on to Blois, from Francis II. trembling above the scaffold of the Huguenots to Henry III. spurning with his foot the face of murdered Guise. Many and strange had been the changes of fortune before Le Balafré's ambition met so terrible an end. The Condé whom we saw at Amboise had fallen at Jarnac nine years afterwards; the unstable Antoine of Navarre was dead; Jeanne d'Albret, the noblest woman of her time, had brought her young son Henry, Prince of Béarn, to be the head of the Huguenot party, though he was as yet too young for much more settled policy than affection for his mother and young Condé, and obedience to the brave Coligny.

But into the heartbreaking struggle of the civil

wars we cannot enter. It is but possible for us to look swiftly at the troublous reign of Charles IX. through the medium of the writings of another Marguerite, another and the last child of Catherine de Medicis, " not less divine but more human in her moods " than the gentle mystic sister of King Francis.

From her we shall learn the life of that Court which still wandered so often to the pleasant castles of Touraine, from the reeking atmosphere of Paris and the Louvre. It is joined with her name that there first comes into prominence the young King of Navarre, who shall at last bring order into the chaos of conflicting parties; it is in company with her that we shall hear, from very close at hand, the clamour of that tocsin of St. Bartholomew, whose echoes troubled every town in France; and we shall be listening to the most celebrated woman of her time, to a princess gifted with the beauty of an Aphrodite, the refinement of a Valois, and a loyalty that was all her own.

The life of Marguerite began in the Court of Catherine of Medicis, in the company of the " escadron volant " and such ladies as Madame de Nevers and Charlotte de Beaune Semblançay, granddaughter of the unhappy Semblançay, executed in the reign of Francis I., a slight, fair-haired woman,

by turns sparkling with vivacity and languishing with a gentle weakness, wife of Simon de Fizes, Baron de Sauves, and afterwards of François de la Trémouille, Marquis de Noirmoutier.

In 1569 came news from Henry, Duc d'Anjou, that threw the whole Court into a bustle of preparation. A battle was imminent, and he must see his mother and the King before he fought. The journey from Paris to Tours was done in three and a half days, and the ladies seem to have derived much amusement from the distress caused to poor Cardinal de Bourbon,[1] whose constitution was little fitted for such unwonted exertions.

It was in the park of Plessis-lez-Tours, at this time, that the childhood of Marguerite first consciously ended, and her brother secured her help and friendship by treating her as a woman grown up and responsible, who should help his interests with the King and with their mother. "Such language," she writes, "was quite new to me. My life hitherto had been quite thoughtless; my only cares the dance and hunting. I had even neglected my dress and personal appearance." [2] Her life was

[1] Charles de Bourbon, Archbishop of Rouen, son of the Duke of Vendôme, called King Charles X. by the League. He would be about forty-six at this time, and died twenty-one years later.

[2] *Mémoires de la Reine Marguerite*, Bibl. Elzevir., P. Jannet, 1858.

henceforth to be among the society described by Brantôme, "whose vices it would be repulsive to suggest, whose virtues were homicide and adultery," [1] where "no man was honoured who could not show blood on his hands, no woman admired who would not boast as loudly of the favours she had granted, as her gallants of the favours they had received."

In such a court, where ignorance was impossible, innocence was almost as rare; and this latest addition to the beauties of the "escadron volant" soon received the approval of her companions in some very creditable scandals which were in circulation about her various intrigues almost immediately after her appearance in public. The Aurora or the Cytherea of the lesser poets of the Court, the Pasithée of Ronsard's verses, she had rapidly taken her place as the acknowledged queen of the many revels of that disastrous time; and indeed at the age of eighteen she seems to have easily surpassed even the loveliest sirens in that band whom Catherine de Medicis had gathered round her, of the fairest faces in the land, for the bewilderment of the gallant captains and politicians of France.

Her thick black hair shaded a face of brilliant whiteness, and from beneath long dark lashes her

[1] Swinburne, *Miscellanies* ("Mary Queen of Scots"), p. 376.

eyes shone suddenly as the delicate red lips moved in speech, and with words of no common kind too, but witty with the unrestrained freedom of her time, and with a learning whose facility and skill were a perpetual amazement to her companions.

Small wonder that her name soon was whispered in connection with that of the leader of the Catholic party, Henri de Guise, the head of the faction with whom she was thrown most in contact. At twenty-two years of age the young Duke of Guise had well-nigh reached the level of his father Francis's fame; the height and elegance of his figure, the natural majesty of his looks and bearing, seemed to confirm the popular opinion which already idolised the son of the great captain, and which was to support him afterwards in his ambitious and ill-fated struggle for the throne of France.

Unfortunately for Marguerite, her own *Mémoires* are not the only sources open to us for information as to her character and her methods; but it seems fairly clear that this, probably her first, love was at any rate sincere. She can as little hide her admiration for De Guise at this time, as she can conceal her passionate feelings for the brave Bussy d'Amboise later on; and she deserves at least such compassion from her judges as shall be always given to a nature keenly susceptible, little liking restraint,

and sacrificed mercilessly upon the altar of political necessity.

Her vexation at the insinuations of Du Guast [1] at this time brought on a fever, in which she was tended by her favourite brother the King; for the royal physicians had themselves been stricken with the disorder. To rid herself of similar persecution in the future, she besought her sister Claude, now Duchess of Lorraine, to arrange the marriage of Henri de Guise with Catherine de Clèves, Princesse de Porcian, which was celebrated in 1571. The House of Lorraine was already but too closely connected with the royal family; any further alliance was impossible.

But other reasons, still more important, had already settled the destinies of Marguerite. Peace had been made with the Huguenots after Jarnac and Montcontour; and an attempt at securing the head of the rebel party by a close alliance with the throne was only what might have been expected from the characteristic political methods of Catherine. It was even rumoured that unless prompt measures were taken, the young Béarnais would soon be betrothed to the English Elizabeth,[2] for

[1] He was assassinated in 1575. No writer of the sixteenth century would have deprived Marguerite's reputation of the honour of his death, so it is put down to her.

[2] See M. H. de la Ferrière, *Le XVIme Siècle et les Valois.*

whom Catherine had already arranged, in her own mind, a match with the Duc d'Anjou. The King was as determined as the rest, and spoke with some levity of the tardiness with which the Pope gave his approval. Margot should be married at any cost, and his own royal hand should give her away.

The opposite party in politics were equally delighted, and Jeanne d'Albret, after her first and very natural disgust at the habits of the Court, managed the negotiations with a skill and intrepidity which deserved a better fate; for after returning to Paris from her visit to the Court in Touraine, she sickened suddenly and died—of a pleurisy, so it was given out; but rumours were persistently spread that her death was owing to the scent of some gloves skilfully prepared by Réné, the Queen's Florentine perfumer; and these reports gained credence from the fact that Ambroise Paré, in his examination of the body, was forbidden to look at the brain, the sole organ that Réné's poisons would have touched. Be this as it may, Jeanne d'Albret was too good a woman for her existence to be long tolerated; her honesty, like Semblançay's long before, was too transparent, her truth too courageous, for life among the Court of Catherine de Medicis, and when her duty to her son brought her into contact with that Court, she was only allowed to live long enough

to complete the negotiations, and not too long for the interests of the Queen-mother. She is one of the few women of her time whose death it is possible, for every reason, to regret.[1]

In August 1572 the marriage of Henry of Navarre to Marguerite de Valois was celebrated with great splendour at the Louvre; and surely there was never a festival at which political necessity so triumphed over human feelings, not only in the principal pair concerned, but in nearly all the spectators. For the young King of Navarre had to stifle his genuine grief for his mother's sudden death, his wife had to conceal her own passions beneath the mask of a proper conjugal affection, no less had Condé to forgive D'Anjou his father's murder, and the young Duc de Guise to forget Poltrot de Méré. Opinions were strangely divided, for even the Catholics themselves realised that something more was in progress than they could fathom, and the Huguenots still felt uneasy, they knew not

[1] It will be remembered that Jeanne was the daughter of our first Marguerite d'Angoulême, Queen of Navarre, the author of the *Heptameron*. It was for Isabeau, her fascinating aunt, that Clement Marot, a favourite with her mother, wrote some of his most charming lines.

> "Elle a très bien cette gorge d'albastre,
> Ce doux parler, ce cler teint, ces beaux yeux,
> Mais en effet ce petit ris folastre
> C'est, à mon gré, ce qui lui sied le mieux."

why. So little could the Princess conquer her repugnance at the last moment to the marriage forced upon her, that the King was obliged with his own hand to bend her head down in token of assent during the ceremony. Neither husband nor wife treated that ceremony as anything save the mockery it really was; and they went their own way, bound yet divided, to the end.

The sole link that ever bound them was the same political necessity which had first brought about their marriage; and to this political necessity (though to this only) Marguerite remained for ever loyal. Her husband was no very brilliant example of conjugal fidelity; and the accepted lover of Madame de Sauves could not severely criticise the mistress of De Guise.

Thus their strange married life began. The first interruption to the fêtes and dances was the "accident" to Coligny, when he was wounded in the shoulder by Maurevel's pistol-shot from a window in the Louvre. It was connected by public opinion with the old ill-founded quarrel between Guise and Coligny about the murder of Duke Francis;[1] and for a while all seemed quiet again.

[1] The original still exists (Bib. Nat. MS. F. 209, fo. 37) of the act by which the children of Duke Francis accept the King's decree as to the innocence of Coligny of their father's murder by Poltrot.

What followed is a matter of history too well known, too wide in scope, for these chapters to relate. We can but look upon one small part of the great tragedy of St. Bartholomew, the part that came beneath the actual notice of Marguerite, so lately married, and from that infer the horrors of the rest.

The resolution to massacre the Huguenots was taken on the 23d of August 1572. Catherine's sole object seems to have been to allow both parties to cut each other's throats and leave the throne the stronger for their fall. Marguerite tells us what really turned the brain of the poor passionate King: "The Huguenots were coming to accuse Guise" of attempting Coligny's murder. De Retz had to explain who were the real culprits, with hints perhaps of another Sicilian Vespers, and other such inventions as the Italians with Catherine de Medicis would employ to fire Charles's unsteady imagination. He suddenly and wildly gave his consent, and at four the next morning Besme, the brutal follower of the Guises, had thrown Coligny's corpse from the upper window to the feet of his master, who stood waiting in the court.

Of all this Marguerite was told nothing. Her first suspicion of the truth came as she went to bed on the night of the council. Her sister Claude

clung to her with tears, beseeching her not to go; but Catherine sternly bade her twice to be off to her own room. Arrived there, and praying to be saved from the unknown dangers which she felt around her, she found the husband she had married but a week ago waiting upon his bed, who ordered her to lie down. "This I did," she writes, "and then found that his bed was surrounded by some thirty or forty Huguenots whom I did not know; for it was but a few days since my marriage. All night they talked of nothing but the mishap which had befallen the Admiral, resolving as soon as day should break to demand justice on Guise from the King, in default of which they would do justice themselves.

"As for me, the tears of my sister continued to trouble my heart, and I could not sleep for the fear which she had given me, though of what I knew not. So the night passed, and I never closed my eyes. At daybreak the King, my husband, said that he was minded to go and play tennis with King Charles, and then and there to ask his justice. He left my room, and all the gentlemen with him. I saw that it was day, and thinking that the peril of which my sister spoke was past, being heavy with sleep, I told my nurse to shut the door that I might sleep at my ease." Meanwhile the tocsin which gave the sig-

nal for the massacre had rung from St. Germain l'Auxerrois, Coligny was past all human justice, and the Louvre itself soon became little better than a shambles.

"An hour afterwards," goes on the Princess, "when I had fallen into a deep sleep, there came suddenly a man beating with his hands and feet against my door, crying, 'Navarre, Navarre!' My nurse, thinking it was the King, my husband, ran swiftly and opened the door. It was a gentleman called M. de Léran,[1] who had a sword-thrust in the shoulder, and a wound from a pike in the arm; he was pursued by four archers, and they all rushed after him into my room. He threw himself upon my bed for safety. Feeling his hold upon me I threw myself into the space between the bed and the wall; he followed, keeping fast hold of my body I knew nothing of the man, and could not discover whether he was there to harm me, or whether the archers were in pursuit of him or of myself; so both of us cried out, the one as frightened as the other. At last, by God's will, M. de Nançay, Captain of the Guard, came in, and finding me in such a plight could not, for all his pity, stay his laughter; with

[1] Readers of Dumas know better; it was La Mole flying from Coconnas and the rest, and taking refuge with the woman who was afterwards to give him her love, as she gave him pity now. Compare the scene in *La Reine Margot*.

sharp reprimands to the archers for their indiscretion he ordered them forth, and granted me the life of the poor man who still was clasping me—him I made to lie down, and gave him remedies in my own cabinet until such time as he was quite cured. While I changed my clothes, for I was all covered with blood, M. de Nançay told me what was going on, and assured me that my husband was in the King's chamber and would suffer no harm. Making me put on a dressing-gown, he led me to the room of my sister, the Duchesse de Lorraine, where I came more dead than alive; for as I crossed the ante-chamber, whose doors were wide open, a gentleman named Bourse, flying from the archers who pursued him, was run through within a few paces from me. I fell half-unconscious into the arms of M. de Nançay on the other side, thinking for the moment that the same blow had wounded both of us." . . .

In her sister's bedroom she begged for the lives of two gentlemen in her husband's suite, which were with difficulty granted her; others were less successful, for the King's brain had given way at the sight of blood, and he was little better than a madman. The scenes outside the Louvre were worse still. Tavannes was slaying like a butcher; Montpensier like a fanatic; De la Rochefoucauld,

who thought the whole thing one more of the wild King's jests, had his throat cut in the middle of a scream of laughter; few like young Caumont de la Force were so fortunate as to escape, sheltered beneath the dead bodies of his brother and his father.

The harvest of death went on, throughout Paris, throughout France, until the whole nation seemed smitten as by a pestilence. Coligny, the one pure-minded politician-soldier, was murdered; Goujon, the artist, was killed even at his work; Ramus, the philosopher, was dead; L'Hôpital had died of grief; and the morality, the religion of the nation was dead with them. A week after the massacre a great flock of crows and ravens settled upon the Louvre, and for days afterwards the King seemed to hear the shrieks of dying men around the palace.

Some annoyance was felt that, amid all this blood-shedding, both Navarre and Condé had come forth scot-free, and the plots began again; but Marguerite would not desert her husband, or consent to a divorce. La Mole and Coconnas, puppets in the hands of stronger wills, paid for their loyalty with their lives, and the sadness of Marguerite grew deeper still at the loss of her favourite brother, the King, " tout l'appuy et support de ma vie, un frère duquel je n'avois receu que bien." The next reign belongs to other chapters, but there are one or two

more pages of the *Mémoires* of Marguerite, one or two more incidents in her life, which cannot be passed over.

It is in 1574 that "the brave Bussy d'Amboise" is first mentioned. "He was born," she says, "to be the terror of his enemies, the glory of his master, and the hope of his friends;" and there is little doubt that he helped to console Marguerite for her husband's absence; it was only five years afterwards that his love for the Countess of Montsoreau was so terribly punished by her husband. But political reasons again proved superior to sentiment in the life of this somewhat hardly-used princess.

Life at the Court became unbearable when war had been openly declared against her husband outside, so she left Paris to help the affairs of her brother D'Alençon in Flanders.

"I travelled," she tells us, "in a litter made with pillars covered with pink Spanish velvet, broidered with gold, and adorned with devices worked in silk; the litter was fitted with glass too, and covered with devices,"—some forty of them, all speaking of the sun and of its effects.

They went to Liège by way of the Meuse in charming boats, but the pleasure of the whole party was suddenly stopped by unforeseen disasters—first by the rising of the river, which obliged them all to

fly for safety up the mountain-side, and then by the sudden illness of a maid-of-honour, Mademoiselle de Tournon. For the romantic story of this young lady's love and death, the tender-hearted reader is referred to Marguerite's own words; they would lose too much in the rendering to permit of their transcription here.[1]

The account of her journey continues to be full of interest. Huy, some six miles from Liège, proves a most inhospitable resting-place, for they drew chains across the streets, and pointed cannon at the Princess's lodging all the night. At Dinan, farther on, the burgomasters had just been elected, "tout y estoit ce jour là en debauche, tout le monde yvre;" and Marguerite's cortége was kept outside the gates while the drunken citizens threw away their cups and seized what arms were near to oppose her entry. At last she rose in her litter, took off her mask, and beckoned to the most important of them

[1] Notice particularly the scene where her ungrateful lover meets her corpse being borne out for burial; he is told that it is Mademoiselle de Tournon—"à ce mot, il se pasme et tombe. Il le fault emporter en un logis comme mort, voulant plus justement, en cette extrémité, luy rendre union en la mort, que trop tard en la vie il luy avoit accordée. Son âme, que je crois, allant dans le tombeau requerir pardon à celle que son desdaigneux oubly y avoit mise, le laissa quelque temps sans aucune apparence de vie; d'où estant revenu, l'anima de nouveau pour luy faire esprouver la mort, qui d'une seule fois n'eust assez puni son ingratitude."

that she wished to speak with him. After some trouble it was arranged that part of her escort should be allowed with her inside the town.

Unluckily, a servant of the bishop's was recognised among them—and the Bishop of Liège was an especial foe—so in a moment all was tumult and disorder again. A drunken deputation came up to Madame la Princesse, apparently with the object of protesting against the bishop, but scarcely able to utter anything intelligible at all. The oldest of them, stuttering and smiling, asked her whether she was a friend of the Comte de Lalain, and her answer that she was not only friend but relation too, restored everything to a complacent state of bacchanalian friendship. During the night the poor Princess's enemies were active. Du Bois, the King's agent, had arrived, and was hard at work plotting to get Marguerite into the power of the Spaniards, and the town into the hands of Don Juan.

But her good friends the burgomasters, having slept off their wine, had not forgotten their promises of friendship, and helped her willingly to escape. So when Du Bois arrived to lead her to Namur, with feigned complaisance she left the town in his company, with several hundreds of the citizens escorting her as well; and by dint of carefully watching and

talking to him, she managed to progress in exactly the opposite direction, to embark herself and her litters on the river, and finally to put the stream between her followers and the Spaniards, much to Du Bois's disgust, who only realised too late the cool audacity of the whole proceeding, and was left storming with anger on the wrong bank amid an amused crowd of citizens from Dinan. With many more adventures she at last travelled by way of Cambresis and Chastelet to her own La Fère, where her brother was waiting for her.

But they were soon obliged to return to Paris to the old intrigues; they arrived in time for St. Luc's marriage with Jeanne de Brissac, at which D'Anjou was so insulted by the "mignons" of the King. The Prince's situation at the Court had become intolerable again, and Marguerite began to plot for his escape. With some difficulty she managed to let him down from a window in the Louvre with a rope ladder; it became necessary to conceal all traces of the flight, so her maids put the ladder on the fire; it made so great a blaze that the chimney itself caught, and in a few moments the royal archers were clamouring at the door to be let in, and extinguish the blaze. They were with difficulty prevailed on "to leave the princess asleep," and let her maids put out the fire, and so the danger passed. At last

Marguerite herself left the Court for Gascony "et ce petit Genève de Pau," where she found her husband ill, and nursed him tenderly. Several months at Nérac followed "où nostre cour estoit si belle et si plaisante, que n'envions point celle de France." If reports were right, Chancellor Pibrac helped the Princess to pass the time here; and Chicot has left upon record how the young Turenne (then Duc de Bouillon) was also gracefully allowed to fall in love with her catholic-minded majesty; Henry himself beguiled the time with La Fosseuse, and the war that followed could have borne no more appropriate name than that of "La Guerre des Amoureux."

It ended in the treaty of Fleix. And after the failure of her favourite brother's expedition in Flanders, and his death (from the fatal bouquet of Diane de Montsoreau), Marguerite returned to Nérac from her short visit to the Court in 1583, and left her husband again after his excommunication by the Pope two years later. A short and stormy visit to Agen followed, and then she disappears within the Château d'Usson, one of the old prisons of Louis XI. in Auvergne. Here the civil wars of 1588 passed her by unharmed, though two years later the royal troops of her husband chased the Leaguers from the field before her very eyes; and so for many more years the actual Queen of France lived in

seclusion, refusing constantly to grant her husband a divorce while Gabrielle d'Estrées is living, but after her death (in 1599) consenting to the Italian marriage.

Though she came again to Paris, she still lived in close retirement until her death some sixteen years later—a retirement which, by her friends, is called a literary and cultured retreat; by her enemies a debauch of wickedness sheltered by the seclusion of her various palaces; and of a like mixed nature is the estimate of her character that has been handed down to us.

As her beauty is of that mould which was apparently more in favour three centuries ago than now, so her morals can with even greater difficulty be made to conform with any modern standard of decorum; but as a type of the Court lady of her time she is unapproachable. With an accurate knowledge of the powers her beauty gave her, and a careful economy of its resources, she tried to live out, according to her knowledge, that life of sentiment, of passion, of sheer human nature, which had well-nigh been crushed out of her at the beginning by the relentless policy of the Queen-mother. Amidst the depravity and corruption of the most shameless Court in Europe, her intellect and her refinement were as rare as they were worthy of

respect; and if we had only her own *Mémoires* to guide us, our estimate of her character and her worth would be a very different one—with so much grace are they written, with so much insight and skill are the events of a distracted time described. Such women as Jeanne d'Albret are rare in the sixteenth century; a Marguerite de Valois is needed to complete the picture—a woman who, to the virtues of the Valois added but a small part of their vices, who of all the children of Catherine de Medicis is the one posterity could least have spared.

Blois

CHAPTER XVIII

BLOIS

"J'avance parmi les décombres
De tout un monde enseveli,
Dans le mystère des pénombres
A travers des limbes d'oubli."

GAUTIER.

BALZAC was afraid that later generations would know nothing of the Château of Blois save from his pages; so far advanced, in his day, was the ruin and decay of the whole fabric. But that ruin has been suddenly and thoroughly arrested; the hand of the conscientious restorer has intervened, and that with a lavishness of display, an ingenuity of detail, very rarely equalled. The "buried world," upon which three centuries of kindly time had laid their touch, has been refashioned in a somewhat garish blaze of gold and carving; there are but few "mysterious shadows" in these brightly-coloured rooms; there is but little left to fancy, to the dreams of the imagination, in a reconstruction so painfully complete.

Yet it is difficult to find fault with that spirit of

almost reverential care which has given us back the great Castle of Pierrefonds, with all its intricacies of defence, which has restored the walls of wondrous Carcassonne, which has preserved the marvels upon Mont St. Michel; and of the two extremes, Blois is perhaps nearer to what is possible for us of perfection than is Chinon, deserted, ruined past recall. To few houses is it given as to Langeais, or Azay-le-Rideau, to escape decay and yet preserve the mellowed beauty of their past—a beauty like the golden haze upon a famous picture, or the strange bloom upon an antique marble, which is something different from any hues or colourings wrought by the hand of man.

But at Blois no change, no renovation can check the rush of memories that press upon the traveller directly he has crossed the threshold beneath the statue of the good King Louis, for the threefold fashion of the architecture around him speaks eloquently of the three great ages through which the life of the castle has passed. The early years when the Orleans princes were educated here, and Valentine Visconti mourned her murdered husband; the terrible days of the sixteenth century, when Guise was murdered above the exquisite carvings of the central staircase; finally, the decaying glories of Gaston and his daughter, fitly framed

in the ruled lines and spaces of the frigid building opposite the entrance.

The first view of Blois from the town shows the outside of the wing of Francis I., ending at the right hand corner in the great tower which was half destroyed when Mansard joined his later buildings on to the older fabric; the whole stands on a rising slope; and beneath the fine buttresses, upon which the wing of Gaston rests, the road plunges deeply into a dark ravine which winds downward to the Church of St. Sauveur, and was once the bed of a stream that joined the waters of the Loire.

The entrance to the château is to the left of Francis's wing, along a winding terrace that leads to a quiet moss-grown square, the old basse-cour into which Raoul rode with letters to the prince, and where the son of Charles the Poet heard the soldiers shouting that the Duke of Orleans was the King of France. There is his statue as Louis XII. above the entrance-gate,[1] with the badge of the porcupine beneath it, which he took from the "camail" that his father wore at Agincourt; and in the inner court, to which the gateway leads, the line of lightly chiselled columns that support the painted roof immediately beyond is also the work

[1] Not the original, which was destroyed at the Revolution. "The father of his people" was not good enough.

of this King, who did much for the improvement of the old feudal fortress which the Dukes of Orleans inherited from the Counts of Blois. The oldest work of all is on the left side of the great court, by the chapel which saw the consecration of Joan of Arc's banner, and the betrothal of Margot to Henry of Navarre; the only other remnant of the earlier fabric is the apartment in which the States-General were assembled in the reign of Henry III. Contrary to the general rule (says M. Viollet le Duc) that all great halls in palaces or châteaux should be composed of two floors, this one is built wholly on the ground-floor, and has no rooms beneath it; it is separated into two parts by a line of columns, and roofed by a double row of vaulted arches; it is not by any means an imposing room—nor, indeed, could the château itself, in the thirteenth century, have been at all a striking edifice—and it is scarcely helped by the extraordinary scheme of colour and pattern which the modern architect has spread regardlessly over its walls.

This council hall was reached by the King through a private staircase leading from the wing of Francis I., the wing to the right hand of the entrance, whose exterior we, like La Fontaine, had seen from the great square in the town outside. It is this wing that contains the gem of the whole

castle—the "escalier à jour" that springs, many-sided, from the sculptured wall and lights up all the court with the exquisite beauty of its lines and carvings. Of the whole architecture of this wing, by an unknown artist, as so often happens in Touraine, there is an excellent description by Mrs. Mark Pattison.[1] "The main features," says this writer, "are such as are common to other châteaux in the valley of the Loire; but there are important though minor differences which specially individualise it. The architectural scheme is very simple. Three rows of pilasters are superimposed one above the other. At about two-thirds down the front the open spiral staircase juts out and towers upwards. It seems at first to stand free, breaking up the even succession of small columns and their perpendicular descent with the bold projection of its octagonal lines. But above, it is embraced and caught into the whole mass by the broad crowning cornice which gathers within its strengthening bands every various curve. The sculptured dormers fret along its edge, searching the air with their pointed tongues, and twice the carved cases of the chimney stacks break aloft through the roof like towers, but the cornice keeps firm hold upon their base." It is the grave simplicity of the wall from which the

[1] *Renaissance of Art in France*, vol. i. p. 51.

staircase springs, the fine and choice instinct of proportion which it displays, says the same writer, that mark this building as a production of the new movement, as an advance on Chenonceaux and Langeais.

The staircase itself is a triumph of ingenuity—

> "Carved with figures strange and sweet,
> All made out of the carver's brain,"

a perfect whole, for which a master mind drew the first plans, and every detail was carefully and lovingly worked out.

The figures poised above the entrance, though they have been for three hundred years out of doors, still preserve the clear, firm touch of their unknown sculptor's chisel, and there is little doubt that these statues are either some of the first work of Jean Goujon in his youth, or are the productions of that school by which he was first and most directly influenced. Everything of unknown origin at this period is generally put down to this artist, but in this case there are certain indications of style which seem to lend somewhat more of certainty to a conjecture usually a trifle reckless. The date of Goujon's best work is considerably later than the time at which the wing of Francis I. was built; yet so elaborate a piece of architecture as this staircase

may very well have remained without the statues that completed it until long after all the surroundings had been finished. There are several stones in it that to this day are quite untouched, a few are only roughly chiselled out; the end of the sixteenth century was too hurried in its methods to allow the perfect completion of a structure for which, as there seems reason to believe, the initial ideas may have been sketched quite early in the reign of Francis I.

Goujon was born in 1520,[1] and it is quite possible that while still a simple mason under old Mâitre Quesnel, and before the work with Pierre Lescot at St. Germain l'Auxerrois had made him famous, the young artist chiselled these figures, or at least the one on the right hand of the entrance, which particularly recalls various mannerisms in the works that are recognised as his.

The folding clothes are held in by a belt below the actual waist, and the drapery is caught up on

[1] For the date of Goujon's birth see *Archives de l'Art Français*, by A. de Montaiglon, iii. 350. Blois was building in 1515 (L. E. de Laborde, *La Renaissance des Arts à la Cour de France*, p. 190); in 1540 Goujon was at Rouen. The next year he worked in St. Maclou and in the Cathedral; in 1542 with Lescot; two years afterwards at Ecouen. The "Fons Nymphium" and the "Caryatides" were carved in 1550, and five years later he had begun the work on the Louvre at which he was employed while the massacre of St. Bartholomew was going on.

the swell of the hip in a way peculiarly his own, and reproduced on the famous Fontaine des Innocents, and in a bas-relief in the Salle des cent Suisses; the very attitude in which the wavy sheaf of water-flags is held is also characteristic of his methods; but more convincing still is the elaborate treatment of the head-dress, with its pendent ornament, and the chiselled bracelet upon the arm, both of which are found especially prominent in the "Diane Chasseresse," another example of the long lithe limbs, and the small breasts high on the body, which Goujon was especially fond of reproducing.

The carving of the canopy of this statue at Blois is alone worthy of long study; though every detail varies, yet each contributes gracefully to the perfection of the whole; here especially is it possible to realise what a labour of love was the work of the old masons, what time unlimited their workmen had, to chisel cunningly at the firm white stone beneath the mellow sunshine of Touraine, until each part was filled with something of the individuality of the man whose life was spent in slow and perfect labour with his hands, until the scheme which gave each workman his allotted task was finished in its harmony of carving, its strength and delicacy of construction and of form. It is often by the shape

and moulding of his mere grotesques that a great artist's power is seen; and this is the case here. Between the statues we have just examined and the main wall is a salamander, marvellous in its originality, its living force of movement, clinging to the stone with a reality that is little short of creative; the line of its spinal column curves firmly from neck to tail as in a living thing, the grip of hind and fore feet set with claws is amazing in its grasp and actuality of movement and organic strength, the very warts upon its scaly back add one more touch of life to this extraordinary carving.

But the wonders of this perfect structure do not cease with the sculpture upon its outward walls. The stairs wind upwards, folding round their central shaft as the petals of a tulip fold one within the other, and by a slight curve at the attachment of each step, a strange look of life and growth is produced that is marvellously helped by the ascending spiral of the column which supports the whole; its waving lines rush upwards like a flame blown from beneath, or like the flying spiral of a jet of water falling fast yet strongly from a height; there is in it a beauty that is elemental, a touch of the same nature that curves the tall shaft of the iris

upwards from the pool in which it grows. But the delicate strength of this central column reproduces with an even greater accuracy the lines that in natural objects are most beautiful because most adapted to the purpose they fulfil; the spiral upon its shaft is the exact curve which is contained within a sea-shell for the beauty of the work is of that necessary order which comes of perfect skill, and finds its ultimate justification in the essential harmony of natural structures. In this particular case it seems more than probable that an actual shell was used consciously as a model; for the absolutely unique double curve of the steps, with their relation to the ascending curves from which they grow, is precisely the same as the spiral and its attachments in the shell. There is a more striking correspondence still: the lines upon the outside of the top part of the shell will be found to have the same arrangement as the balustrades on the exterior of the staircase, *and reversed, in exactly the same way as the spiral.* It is tempting to complete the hypothesis by imagining such a shell as this to have been in the possession of the architect to whom the first plans of the work were due: he must have been a man who collected natural objects to study the secrets of their beauty; a man of unequalled constructive power, for the groin-work and vaulting

of the stairs are not the least astounding part of the whole building; a man, too, of extraordinary imagination, and with a sense of harmonious proportion rarely equalled in the world. Scarcely any one of that time save Leonardo da Vinci possessed a genius at once so universal and so thorough, and Leonardo was at Amboise, a little farther down the river, just when the first plans of this staircase would be required. Is it possible that Francis found one last sketch, one remnant of the dying artist's genius, and employed to decorate his newest château the last " tour de force " of the great master for whom he had no care to build a tomb?

It is possible to realise, even more keenly than elsewhere, the full spirit and movement of the true Renaissance, when such a gem of art and architecture as the wing of Francis I. is placed next to the cold and meaningless productions of François Mansard at the height of his reputation, at the most chilling point of his respectability. In this wing, opposite the entrance, so different from all the rest of the château, lived Gaston d'Orléans, dullest of royal dullards, himself so chillingly respectable that he had formed a plan of delivering up the whole of the palace to the mercies of reforming Mansard, and would have done so, had not Providence removed him in time and preserved for the wonder

of later ages the fantasies of a creation too unfettered for his slow wit to understand.

The early history of the castle is connected with those Counts of Blois whom we have already heard of in tracing the fortunes of their mortal enemies, the Angevin Counts. Upon the remains of the old Roman camp which held the tongue of land between the Loire and the now lost Arou, the robber captains of the sixth and seventh centuries built their first rude stronghold, which was later on to become part of the wide possessions held by the Counts of Vermandois, Champagne, and Blois. These three houses were among the first of the great feudal families of France in the eleventh and twelfth centuries; their relationships extended to lands as far apart as England and Palestine, while nearer home Flanders, Burgundy, Aquitaine, and Navarre were all more or less closely connected with the same powerful stock. It was from Thibault le Tricheur, whose fame still fills the low country all round Chambord, that the Château of Blois received its first donjon built with money raised by certain fraudulent practices, and increased by more open deeds of violence and robbery. Even if authenticated records of these times were forthcoming they would be of little interest, for the quarrels of the barons had not much influence on the real history

of France; but before the thirteenth century the possessions of Champagne and Vermandois had fallen by marriage to King Philip IV., and by 1233 Chartres and Blois had been bought by the Crown from another Count Thibault. Blois had become Crown property, and was soon to be the recognised possession of the family of Orleans.

The historian Froissart, who was chaplain here during the regency of the dukes in the first years of Charles VI.'s reign, relates an interview that took place between the Dukes of Burgundy and Berry concerning the old quarrels between Brittany and France; but the castle began to take its actual place in the history of France when Louis d'Orléans brought Valentine Visconti here from Milan.[1] The princess had made a triumphant entry into Paris, and had immediately secured the good graces of the King; but her happiness was very short-lived, and this visit to Blois, one of the many homes of her clever and unfeeling husband, seemed almost a flight from the horror of the poor King's madness, which she had tried in vain to soothe, and from the dark suspicions of the changeable populace of Paris.

About this time Eustache Deschamps, the poet, was " maître d'hôtel " to the duke, and at his marriage in 1393 received from his patron a present of

[1] See Chapter VI. " Three Dukes of Orleans."

five hundred gold pieces. It was by Eustache's care that the library, which had been begun by a small donation from the royal collection, was increased by the *Three Pilgrimages of Human Life, of Christ, and of the Soul*, bought from one Jehan Bizet, and written in cursive characters. There was a *Legende Dorée* too, bound in the black velvet which the duke especially affected, and a *History of the Old and New Testament* by Pierre Comestor, which had been translated in the last century, and cost the duke as much as eighty gold crowns. A book to the taste of Madame Valentine was perhaps *La Consolacion de Boèce*, which her husband bought in Paris—she needed comfort as much as most women of her time; while the scholarly proclivities of the duke himself are traceable in the *Problesmes d'Aristote*, translated by Evrard de Conty, which he bought from a Paris student, whose tastes were probably more in the direction of the outspoken rhymes with which François Villon was soon to delight the idle scholars of the capital.

But Valentine was not allowed to rest for long in the quiet valley of the Loire. She had to rejoin the duke, whose excess and immorality soon brought their inevitable punishment, and in 1407 she was once more at Blois in even greater grief than at her former visit, for this handsome, cruel

husband, whom she had loved passionately in spite of all his faults, had been basely murdered in the streets of Paris. Her attempts at vengeance failed. The poor King's mind, which in its weakness showed more plainly all those feelings which its strength had hidden, was warped for ever against his brother of Orleans; the murder was pardoned, praised even, and the gentle heart of Valentine was broken in a year.

Her son Charles in his first years showed but little of the poetic temperament which always passed almost unnoticed by his companions. In company with Dunois, the famous Bastard, the most capable of all the children of Duke Louis, he was soon at work organising the forces which were to fall at Agincourt. In 1415 the battle had been won and lost, Charles had been taken prisoner, and the Château of Blois was deserted. Twelve years afterwards even the library which had lightened the hours of those who were left behind in mourning for their lord was removed to Saumur for greater safety; for tidings had reached the duke in his captivity of the movements of the English in the valley of the Loire.

The castle itself was soon filled with tokens of coming change. In 1429 Joan of Arc was in the Church of St. Sauveur, where the Archbishop of

Rheims blessed the standard she was to bear to victory; and the tide of English invasion turned at last. But the delivery of Charles d'Orléans was not yet. Dunois was in charge of the castle when the conspiracy of the Praguerie broke out that was organised by the Dauphin Louis against his father Charles VII.; and only in 1440, after twenty-five long years, did the duke return home again. Of his life at Blois we know already; to him and to his son are chiefly owing those Italian influences which were most worth copying by French artists, and which lend their peculiar charm to the work of this period at Blois. But the most important event during his life at the castle, both to his family and to France, was the birth of the young Louis d'Orléans, who was to be King Louis XII. He was held at the font by Louis XI. The father was congratulated by his poets, and by the whole country; and having little else to do in life, he left it gracefully soon afterwards.

The next few years of the story of the Château of Blois are the years of the childhood of the young duke who was to be Louis XII.

With the help of a miniature in a fifteenth-century MS. of the "Roman de Renaud de Montauban," we can imagine the boy seated by his mother at the table beneath a high red canopy upon the

dais of the great hall, with two maids of honour in their lofty head-dresses on either side. There is a hound pacing across the tiled floor and watching the pages, who move to and fro between the sideboard and the dais; and from a gallery draped in red, above their heads, the musicians blow quaint instruments and play the tunes that poet Charles delighted in; while all the time at lower tables the talk flows merrily and unrestrained among the vassals and retainers of the Court.

Saint Gelais tells us how the boy was taught to read before he was seven years old, and soon showed a great love for history, which he probably first read in the four great black velvet volumes of the *Miroir Historial* in his father's library, a kind of unwieldy encyclopædia of the Middle Ages.[1]

By the age of seventeen he could leap, wrestle, shoot, and play tennis with the best, and particularly aroused the historian's admiration for his excellent horsemanship. Nor was the example of his mother's life thrown away upon him. With the help of her women the good duchess made five hundred shirts yearly to be given away, and quietly provided in many other ways for the poorest in-

[1] The fine library which had been begun by Louis d'Orléans, and which was much improved by Louis XII., was moved by Francis I. to Fontainebleau in 1544.

habitants of every town in which she might be living. She taught her son to be forgiving at any rate, for when he came to the throne after Charles VIII.'s death, he behaved civilly enough to the men who in earlier years had been obliged to oppose him, not only in the Brittany wars but in the haphazard skirmishes in Italy.

"La Trémouille," says Jean Bouchet, "made great mourn at the death of his master King Charles, for with that body he lost all hope of reward for his labours." At Saint Aubin, too, he had soundly beaten Louis, and had little expectation of the generous reception that awaited him at Blois. "Le Roi de France oublie les injures du duc d'Orléans," said the King, and La Trémouille was confirmed in all his states and dignities.

The strength of Louis' character had received a rude shock before this from the unfeeling policy of Louis XI., and he was only enabled to recover at his own accession to the throne. The marriage to Jeanne de France, never one of inclination, must have been very hard for the young prince to bear in the first strength of his manhood.

Our pity for the unhappy victim of her father's cruel calculations has perhaps hardened our judgment upon the young Duke of Orleans. It is upon Louis XI. that the blame of the inevitable misery

that followed should rightly be laid. Saint Gelais emphasises the impossibility of refusal when once the royal will had been declared, and Jeanne must have long been ready with the gentle words of renunciation and loyalty which La Trémouille brought from her to Louis as soon as Charles VIII. was dead.

Her husband was now King of France, and the necessity for a son to carry on his line was stronger than the ties of individual affection, if indeed we may suppose that Jeanne had ever loved the husband upon whom she had been thrust. She retired to the Duchy of Berry with a suitable retinue allowed her by the King, and died, with a great reputation for her sanctity of life, in 1504 at Bourges.

The proceedings for divorce had necessitated the presence in France of one whom we have already met at Chinon, Cæsar Borgia, Duc de Valentinois, the bearer of the bull from Alexander VI.

This extraordinary man was a worthy actor of the strange part he had to play, dramatic and inevitable as the succession of events in ancient tragedy. He had come to Chinon bearing besides the bull a Cardinal's hat for Georges d'Amboise, the first real Cardinal prime minister of France, and in a far more real sense than Balue or Briçonnet, the true fore-

runner of Richelieu and Mazarin. And now Cæsar's presence at Blois was due to the inevitable return which had to be made for the favour of the Pope's consent. A bride had to be provided for this new prince of France, whose dignities were increased by the gift of the Collar of St. Michael. Frederic of Naples absolutely refused his daughter Carlotta, and the King, after publicly marrying Anne de Bretagne at Nantes in January 1499, proposed Germaine de Foix or Charlotte d'Albret, sister of the King of Navarre, as a wife for the Italian. The latter was selected, and we may hope that, here at any rate, she was happy in a husband who was handsome even for a Borgia; for his face and figure, we are told, were very near perfection, and he possessed a subtle fascination, even for men, that attracted women as a magnet draws the iron.[1] He wrote to Alexander VI. soon after, de-

[1] Of the few portraits left of Cæsar Borgia, Yriarte considers that the woodcut in Paulus Jovius is the most authentic. There is a supposed portrait by Raphael that is not hastily to be accepted.

In the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris there are three types of his face—a woodcut in the style of Albert Dürer, a drawing by Le Cœur which shows a long nose, flowing hair and moustache, and a "bold bad eye," and a cut by B. Bernaerts of Cæsar in youth, with the motto—

"Cui tranquilla quies odio cui proelia cord
Et rixa et caedes seditioque fuit.

scribing his impressions of their "mariage de convenance."

No sooner was the wedding over than Louis was deep in schemes for Italian invasion, which were certainly as disastrous for France as Lorenzo de Medicis foretold they would be to Italy. By September in the same year Cæsar himself had gone to Italy, and his wife was left in France never to see this strange husband again.[1] With his career in Italy we have nothing to do. Like a baleful stroke of lightning he flashed across the clouds of Italian intrigue, and disappeared before men understood his meaning.

After his father's death he went to Spain. His political life was ended, and the epilogue came fitly in an imprisonment, a wildly venturous escape, and a death in a skirmish when fighting for the King of Navarre, against desperate odds, with the rebellious Comte de Lerins. His memory has been blackened

[1] Charlotte retired to Valence. Later on she tried to reach her husband in Italy, but he stopped her at Naples: she had become unnecessary, and he had no time or inclination for family affection. She then went to live at Issoudon, a town which had been given to Cæsar, and there educated her daughter Louise, who in 1516 (two years after her mother's death) married Louis de la Trémouille. By the treaty of Blois in October 1505 Germaine de Foix was given to Ferdinand in marriage; he was to hand over Naples to her descendants, and cement France and Spain against the interest of the Borgias.

with the universal condemnation of posterity; but only to great natures is it given to sin so greatly as did Cæsar Borgia. Born at a time which had cast off the old morality and was not yet ready for the new, he grew up amid the most licentious Court in a licentious age; yet, of all who then lived, he alone saw the true issues to which events inevitably tended.

Far differently from his father, the lying, sensual diplomat, he saw, as a true statesman, above all as a thorough soldier, the one end that was worth striving for. While Ludovico Sforza, while the councils of Florence and of Venice were miserably wasting time in weakening their neighbours, he alone saw that the unity of Italy was worth the battle, and was possible, and because he failed he has been pitilessly judged. "Gran conoscitore della occasione," says Machiavelli of this prince, who captivated the intellect of the astute ambassador; and this is his chiefest praise. The friend of Pintoricchio, of Michael Angelo, of Leonardo da Vinci, his engineer, staunch always in his love for Lucrezia—"belle et bonne, douce, courtoise à toutes gens," as Bayard says of her—Cæsar Borgia must be judged, not on his private life, but on his aspirations to his country. He failed, he was crushed by adverse fortune, he died before his youth had grown to the

strength that should give fulfilment to its promises; his motto remained, "Aut Cæsar aut nihil." He died too young to be a Cæsar, he was much more than nothing while he lived.[1]

In 1501 a very different scene was passing within the walls of Blois.

Robert de la Marche, who was afterwards the Maréchal de Fleuranges, tells us of his introduction to the Court. Being about nine years of age, and "se sentant solide sur son petit cheval, il délibère en lui-même," after the precocious fashion of young adventurers of the time, and at length, with his tutor and some other friends, he rides to Blois to offer the strength of his small arms to King Louis. "Welcome, my son," said the King; "you are too young yet to serve me, and so you shall go live with M. d'Angoulême at Amboise, with whom you will be very happy."—"I will go wherever you may please to order," replied the child. To Amboise he went accordingly, to play with the young Prince

[1] The Valentinois title was revived with Diane de Poitiers, and later researches have brought to light that it is still preserved by the Prince of Monaco, as the *Almanach de Gotha* tells us. In the *Standard* for 24th April 1891 occurs the following paragraph: "The last descendant of the once powerful family of Borgias died last week in distressed circumstances. He was the grandson of Don Alberto Calisto di Borgia, and during the last twenty years had gained his living as a photographer."

Francis, and make friends with the future King of France.[1]

In the same year there was a magnificent reception of the Archduke Philip of Austria at the château. The whole of the State ceremonial has been carefully preserved for us by a conscientious Court chronicler. On the 6th of December the visitors left Orleans and reached Saint Dié, close to Blois, where they found several falconers with their birds sent forward by the King to amuse his guest upon his way. The Archbishop of Sens, Monsieur de Rohan, and many others had also come from the Court to meet him, and all the way along the road the cortége was met by companies of gentlemen who welcomed the archduke to Blois. It was late when they all reached their journey's end, and torches were flashing from the river as they rode into the town, the ladies all on palfreys harnessed in black and crimson velvet. The whole courtyard of the castle was filled with the King's archers, and the Swiss bodyguards kept back the

[1] As we have seen, Louis XII. died without male issue. Anne de Bretagne had to be content with "ma fille Claude et ma fille Renée." "Anne Reine de France," writes Louise de Savoie, who was watching events eagerly from Amboise, "le jour de Sainte après 21 Jan. eut un fils, mais il ne pouvait retarder l'exaltation de mon César, car il avoit faute de vie."

Louis XII.'s third marriage proved no more fruitful, and Francis, Duc d'Angoulême, became Francis I.

Château of Blois, Wing of Francis I.

crowd that pressed forward to see the procession pass into the doorway of the new-built castle, that had just been decorated with the porcupine of Louis XII.

The archduke slowly made his way to the great hall, which was all hung with cloth of gold, and tapestry that pictured the fall of Troy. Upon a broad velvet carpet was the King's chair, with Monseigneur d'Angoulême behind it, and the greetings were soon over with great courtesy on either side. The archduchess was some little way behind; the press had been so great that she was somewhat separated from her husband, but at last she appeared, and having obtained the sanction of the Bishop of Cordova she kissed King Louis and the young duke, and was then, with great consideration, sent away to the ladies. "Madame," said the kindly King, "je sais bien que vous ne demandez qu'à être entre vous femmes, allez-vous en voir ma femme, et laissez-nous entre nous hommes." The crowd was still so thick in all the rooms and passages that movement became a thing of time and patience, even for the great; and when they met the baby princess Claude, carried by Madame de Tournon's daughter, that little lady signified her disapproval of the whole ceremony with such lusty yells that etiquette had to be disregarded, and all

the four-and-twenty small girls who followed the princess set themselves loyally to soothe her discontent.

At length the company were distributed in their various rooms, the still-protesting princess to her apartment hung with tapestries of farmyard scenes and "tout petits personnages," the archduke to his chamber, adorned with stories of the Trojan War, and Anne de Bretagne to the room that was decorated with a kind of "natural history pattern" of strange birds and beasts.

Later on refreshments were borne to the archduchess in solemn procession, led by the "maitre d'hôtel," with little page-boys after him, clad in yellow silk with velvet slashes, bearing each a waxen candle in a golden candlestick. Madame de Bourbon followed, carrying a great gold box filled with all kinds of confectionery and sweetmeats, then Madame d'Angoulême with a gold box filled with napkins, and Madame de Nevers with yet another filled with knives and forks. And so the Court goes pompously to bed, to wake up and find the morning so unkind that the weather barely permitted them to go outside the castle, though the King and the archduke did their best to get sport with their falcons.

Some few more days of solemn ceremony and

courtly converse and the guests left Blois in as great state as they came. It is amusing to note with what contempt the chronicler dismisses any attempt at business or State affairs which may have been transacted; for him it is enough that all the ceremonials were got through decently and in order; and for us, too, the politics may remain in the background: what little of the history of the times was possible for us has already been described.

It was at this time that the castle began to assume something of its present shape. The whole of the wing in which the entrance door is placed was built and ready for the archduke and his suite. And it is here that we can see Anne de Bretagne at her best, among the ladies of her Court. "Like another Vesta," says Hilarion Costa, "or another Diana, she held all her nymphs in strict discipline, and yet remained full of sweetness and courtesy."

In the library at St. Petersburg there is a picture of the Queen weeping for her husband absent at the wars in Italy. She is dressed in a black head-dress and a square-cut bodice, holding a kerchief to her eyes and writing. A great bed takes up much of the room, a bird mopes in a cage, and on the floor in one corner is a group of girls watching her silently. In the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris is the sequel to the scene. The Queen is now seated

upon a kind of canopied throne, while her women cluster round admiring the royal letter that is being folded. Still another picture shows us the Queen, her corded girdle at her side, and a fine smile of conscious rectitude upon her face, handing the epistle to her courier, while the attendant ladies with difficulty restrain their emotions.

This letter may have been one of those compositions in verse in which Fausto Andrelini assisted, or Jean d'Auton, the King's historian; for Anne was strong in literary tastes, and did much to help her husband form that famous library, based on the older collections of his grandfather, which was afterwards to go to Paris.[1] One part of the château the Queen particularly affected. "Voilà mes Bretons," she would say, "qui sont sur ma perche et qui m'attendent," and the terrace where she loved to meet her countrymen is still known as the "Perche aux Bretons." These soldiers were the bodyguard of a hundred gentlemen whom she had picked out to attend her, in the same way as she had begun the "Court of ladies," the innocent forerunner of the "escadron volant," over which Brantôme waxes so enthusiastic.

[1] Many of the most precious MSS. in the Bibliothèque Nationale come from this library.

See Bibl. Nat. MS. No. 5091, in which Jean des Maretz is depicted giving the Queen a book.

On the 9th of January 1514, at the age of thirty-seven years, Anne died at the Château of Blois, to the great grief of her husband. Brantôme has described the magnificence of her funeral.

Not long afterwards Louis XII. followed her to the tomb, and with his death ends the first part of the château's history. He left an ineffaceable mark upon the place, and the porcupines carved here and there upon the walls remind us still of the son of Charles d'Orléans. It was here that he transacted nearly all the important business of the State, the famous Ordonnances of Blois, and the three great treaties of 1504. It was here that he was brought to recover, in his natal air, whenever illness pressed upon him in the more confined atmosphere of the capital.

The love he had for Blois he bequeathed to his daughter Claude, the wife of Francis, to whom is no doubt due the initiation of those magnificent works which were to give a third side to the château, and to provide the background for the drama that is to come, the drama of the sixteenth century that was now well on its way.

Blois

CHAPTER XIX

BLOIS (*Continued*)

"Sit subitum quodcunque paras, sit caeca futuri
Mens hominum fati, liceat sperare timenti."

LUCAN.

QUEEN CLAUDE, the daughter of Anne de Bretagne and wife of Francis I., is the link in the history of Blois between the old times and the new. It was her fondness for her father's home that persuaded the King to build the famous wing of Francis I. that was to give shelter after his reign to Marie Stuart, and later on to Henry III.; and at her death it was left unfinished. Francis left it for Gaston d'Orléans to complete in the next century, and went off to build the gigantic Chambord in the plains of the Sologne—Chambord which might have been added to the home of Claude, and made of Blois so fair a palace that Versailles would never have existed.

For the next few reigns not much of interest happened at the castle. In 1536 Madame Madeleine de France was betrothed here to James V. of Scotland, and they were married shortly afterwards in Paris. A young page went with them, who had

been given to the Scottish King by the Duke of Orleans, after the fashion of the time: it was Ronsard, who stayed in the north two years and six months, and came back at the age of sixteen to go with De Baïf to Germany, before he settled down in France as the favourite Court poet of the King.

Of the imitation of classical authors, for which Michelet so severely criticises Ronsard, there is a striking example at Blois in 1549, when a "tragedy" was performed, which was the latest development of that dramatic instinct which we have already had occasion to notice.

In the museum now attached to the buildings of the château there is an old plank covered with rude paintings and rough verses such as were sung by the first players of Mysteries and Sottises whom we found at Amboise. There had been a somewhat sudden development in these primitive dramatic writings; the laxity of public morals, and the decline in public religion which was emphasised by the growing struggles between Huguenots and Catholics, had produced their inevitable result in the national literature; the mystery had been neglected for the farce, and a strange compromise had been effected between the two, which by 1541 reached such a pitch of scandal and disorder that they were definitely suppressed by the Government. The

death of the old religious theatre was the signal for the rise of the literary theatre under the auspices of Ronsard and the Pleiad, and the efforts of these pioneers in the dramatic art have been somewhat too harshly condemned from a lack of due appreciation of their strange position. The old methods had been cast aside, and for the time no new ones were forthcoming. It was inevitable that the revival of classical learning, which was then at its height, should have pointed out the new way that was to be trodden by the dramatic author; so such pieces as *Cléopâtre*, *Médée*, and *Antigone* appear, mere copies, often bad ones, of the old originals, but the best then possible. Not to every age is it given to produce a Molière, who should make a national comedy from the old Confrères de la Passion at the Hôtel de Bourgogne; and this first classical revival which began with Jodelle and the rest was strong enough to last through Corneille and Racine, until Dumas and Hugo startled the literary world with the first French romantic drama, the drama which first drew its scenes from the history of Touraine, from the "Court of Henry III." at Blois, and the "Huguenots" at Chenonceaux.

Appropriately enough, it was owing to Catherine de Medicis that one of these early French adapted tragedies was played at Blois. Brantôme par-

ticularly praises it, saying that " M. de Saint Gelais composed it, or rather took and stole it from another, with better ornamentation." [1]

There were not many fêtes at Blois during the reign of Henry II., and for the greater part of it Catherine must bide her time and watch her rival's triumph at Chenonceaux; but already the martial curé at Mériot, who was better at holding pistols and an arquebuse than at intoning prayers, had discovered the inconveniences of a Church militant upon earth. Claude Haton's *Mémoires*, full of details as to weather, crops, and prices, unreliable as records of character or of policy, are yet full of compassion for the sufferings of the poor by war and by disease. They express plainly and simply the common opinions of the time, and show very fairly the direction in which affairs were tending. In 1558 he was at Paris and saw the marriages of Claude de France and Marie Stuart.

Soon afterwards—

" Pleurez donc la France désolée,"

cry the *Mémoires*,

" Maudissez le coup de lance,
Maudissez Lorge qui la branle."

[1] " *Sophonisbe*, tragédie très excellente, tant pour l'agrément que pour le poly lengage, représentée et prononcée devant le roy, en sa ville de Blois," Paris, 1559, in 8vo.

Henry II. was dead, and the young King and Queen moved their Court to Blois.

In the new wing of the castle Catherine de Medicis with her two young children, the Duc d'Anjou and Marguerite de Valois, lodged in the rooms that were decorated with the device of Claude, the wife of Francis I., two C's intertwined with lilies and the wings of a swan. The panelling of her library, rescued from the decay into which it had fallen, still shows traces of the colouring which threw into bold relief the exquisite carving of its walls; there are two hundred and thirty panels here, all different, and each a brilliant example of workmanship and design. This cabinet alone would be sufficient indication of the luxury of decoration lavished by four Valois Courts upon the château; its solidity is conspicuous in the great wall of division which cuts through the whole wing like a spinal column, and divides each story into a double range of rooms, each large enough, as Balzac said, to hold a company of infantry with ease. Above the rooms of Catherine de Medicis, and with an exactly similar arrangement, were the apartments of Francis II. and Marie Stuart, and it is during their visit here in 1560 that the drama of the Religious Wars, and of the attempts of the Lorraines at power, first began to be unfolded.

The Guises were at this time in the château, the Duke Francis and the Cardinal; and though they had, like many others of the Court, their own hotel in the town, they preferred to watch events from close at hand, and were lodged in the rooms of Louis XII. above the twisted columns of the entrance; and they had many things to watch, for the Loire, then as always, was covered with boats sailing from the west and bearing emissaries from the Huguenot headquarters, or Guisard spies who brought news to the Cardinal; Catherine herself, "niece of a pope, mother of four Valois, a Queen of France, widow of an ardent enemy of the Huguenots, an Italian Catholic, above all a Medicis," had showed signs of favouring the heretics; and the Guises were on the alert for traces of conspiracy, eager to crush once and for all the party that opposed them both in religion and in politics. But for the present Catherine seemed inclined to follow her favourite motto, "Odiate e aspettate," and life at the Court went on unwitting of coming change, and happy in the pleasure of the two royal lovers in their rooms above. We can imagine the day on which was first sounded the signal of alarm. The courtyard is filled with officers and men-at-arms, and the sun just rising above the carved and traceried windows of the roof shines on pourpoints

and slashed trunk-hose, and glitters on the hilts of swords; within, all is in the bustle that indicates the expected presence of the King, who is soon to give his morning greeting to the Court. Marshalled under the watchful eyes of the Comtesse de Fiesque and the Duchesse de Guise, are the two bands of maids-of-honour, on one side those of Catherine, on the other (nearer to the royal apartments) those of Marie Stuart; talking to them is the young Prince Charles, brother of the King, dressed in cloth of gold embroidered with black flowers, and a short black cloak; behind him is his tutor Amyot, and farther on the Chancellor Olivier, while Brantôme has already begun a conversation with Mademoiselle de Piennes, one of the maids-of-honour, criticising the poetry of De Baïf and Du Bellay, who had the day before arranged a fête for the amusement of the Court.

Some of the ladies passed the time in reading. She who was afterwards to be "la belle Fosseuse" of Henry of Navarre was beginning her education early with the *Amadis de Gaule*, by the Seigneur des Essarts; Madame de Guise fingered Boccaccio's *Celebrated Ladies*. Tales of gallantry were at the time far more in favour at the Court than books upon religious subjects, or even the many political pamphlets with which the League and its oppo-

nents afterwards flooded the capital and the provinces.

But the Huguenot cause was not without its representatives even here. Groslot, the servant of Jeanne d'Albret, was watching the proceedings; Coligny and Châtillon are there too, talking with Moret of the visit of Théodore de Bèze to Nérac, when all whisperings ceased suddenly, as Dayelle, the favourite waiting-woman of the Queen, announced that their Majesties were entering the room. The face of Catherine, grave and sombre, almost livid in the daytime though the ivory skin lit up well at night, threw into lively contrast the fresh pink and white of the youthful and piquant Marie Stuart, whose careless gaiety had completely captivated the fragile little King, almost crushed by the severity of his mother.

But on this morning at the Court at Blois all three seemed equally depressed, for strange news had reached them. The Guises, who arranged everything, had suddenly given out that the King's life was in danger, and he must go for safety to Amboise. By degrees the news spread through the ranks of attendant courtiers, to the guards who waited in the embrasures of the staircase, to the men-at-arms below. The assembly in the rooms above broke up hastily, and the château was

soon in all the hurry and discomfort of a swift departure.

What passed thereafter at Amboise we know already. It was the beginning of the terrible thirty years of bloodshed that were to be signalised in still more horrible a fashion at the massacre of St. Bartholomew, and were to stain the very walls of Blois with the traces of their cruelty and their assassinations. Catherine de Medicis was in her element, the country was full of wars and rumors of wars, and one by one the actors in the drama fall, and their places are taken by others.

Soon after the battle of Dreux, news reached her of the assassination of the Duke of Guise by Poltrot, and she wrote at once to the Cardinal of "le malheureux inconvénient advenu à son frère." Henry, the son of the murdered man, was established in all his father's rights and dignities.

The death of the Prince of Condé, too, brought another Henry on the scene. The young prince of Béarn, who had been placed by his mother, Jeanne d'Albret, under the care of Caumont la Force during the campaign which ended at Jarnac, was now raised to be the head of the Huguenot party, and under the guidance of his mother and Coligny soon made his influence evident to the anxious plotters round the Court of Charles IX.

The position had indeed become one of considerable difficulty, and it was by means of the King's sister, Marguerite de Valois, already famous for her beauty and her wit, that a "rapprochement" was hoped for between the hostile parties.

At Blois the first negotiations were begun by Beauvais, tutor to the young Prince of Navarre, who was sent by Jeanne d'Albret to the Court while she herself went throughout her estates establishing the reformed religion, strengthening the University of Béarn, and chasing the Catholic priests out of the country. Beauvais came back overjoyed with the reception, but, says Bordenaye, "ceux qui n'avaient l'entendement opilé par les crudités et viscosités de l'ambition et de l'avarice avaient ces trop grandes caresses pour suspectes." Towards the end of 1571 Jeanne d'Albret left her son under the care of Beauvais, and travelled by way of Biron (which she reached on 21st January in the new year) towards Poitiers, where the Pope's legate met her coach and passed it without a sign, for the Queen of Navarre was in no good odour at the Vatican, and Paul V. had very vehemently exclaimed against the marriage of a son of this determined heretic with a Valois princess. But Charles IX. had expressed his own opinion in language even more vigorous than the Pope's, and

every preparation was made to receive Jeanne d'Albret at the Court. The first interview took place at Chenonceaux, but from Tours (which she had only reached by the 10th of February) the Queen writes to her son of the difficulties of her position. "Je vous assure que je suis en grande peine, car l'on me brave extrêmement et j'ai toutes les patiences du monde." She sends him news of the Princess Marguerite, and of her own niece then betrothed to the young Prince of Condé, with various warnings as to the customs of the Court; but it is from Blois that her indignation really breaks out, at what she sees around her. Writing from the château on the 8th of March 1572,[1] she complains bitterly of the cynical deceit and carelessness with which her advances are received. "I am so shamefully used," she cries, "that you may well say my patience passes that of Griselda. . . . Madame (Marguerite) is beautiful, witty, and graceful, but brought up in the most terribly corrupted company; there is not one here but is

[1] The beginning of this now famous letter explains the long time that was taken over the journey. "Mon fils," she writes, "je suis en mal d'enfant, et en telle extrémité que, si je n'eusse pourvu, j'eusse été extrêmement tourmentée." It increases our admiration for her strength of resolution and courage that these difficult negotiations should have been carried on during great bodily distress, and in much mental trouble wilfully caused her by Catherine.

tainted with it. Your cousin, the Marquise, is so changed that there is not a vestige of religion left in her *save that she never attends mass.* For nothing in the world would I have you living here; there is my reason for your marrying and taking yourself and your wife out of this corruption, for it is far worse than ever I believed. It is no longer the men who ask the women, but the women ask the men. If you were here yourself you would only escape by some remarkable mercy of God. I send you a favour to wear beneath your ear since you are now for sale, and some studs for your cap."

Marguerite herself would send no messages to her betrothed, but otherwise was respectful enough to the mother, who admits to Beauvais that the princess " has a fine figure, but laces herself very tightly, and uses so much artificial help for her complexion that I am grieved to think how she will spoil it; but at this Court women paint as much as in Spain. You would scarcely believe how pretty my own daughter is in these surroundings. Every one attacks her religion, but she holds her own and gives in not a whit. Every one loves her."

Coming fresh from her edicts against gaming and sumptuous apparel in the south, Jeanne d'Albret was hardly of a mind to appreciate the over-dressed princess, whom Brantôme describes

with so much enthusiasm at this time, taking part in the procession during the " Pâques Fleuries " at Blois, and resplendent in a robe of cloth of gold which had been given by the Sultan to M. Grandchamp, and by him presented to Madame Marguerite. " Nor is this all," continues the same chronicler, " for she walked in her place in the procession with her face uncovered, so as not to deprive men during so great a festival of its gracious light, and seemed more beautiful still as she held in her hand her sceptre (as all our Queens are wont to do) with a queenly dignity, with a grace half royal and half tender."

The fêtes kept up during the whole visit were of unusual magnificence, and were doubtless meant to show how much more brilliantly the Catholics could live than their Protestant opponents. The King was no unready pupil of his crafty mother, and Coligny himself had been enticed from La Rochelle to see the splendour of the Court.[1]

[1] There is an interest for Englishmen in the family of Coligny, apart from the admiration which his character and life must always arouse among a nation which (whatever its other faults) were certainly averse to the doubtful methods of policy in favour among Coligny's enemies. His ancestor was Gaspard de Coligny, Marshal of France under Charles VIII., Louis XII., and Francis I., and through his uncle, Montmorency, he was connected with the house of Nassau. William of Nassau (the Silent) was father of the great General

At last the marriage contract was drawn up, and in June the Queen of Navarre was in Paris. On the 10th of that month she was dead, being only forty-four years old. It may well have been the poisoned gloves that killed her, as tradition tells, for Maître René, Catherine's instrument in such delicate situations, was equal to gracefully removing any one who was at all obnoxious to the Queen-mother.

Jeanne d'Albret was too much given to taking things "au grand sérieux" for this careless and unscrupulous age, her religion was too much of a reality for the polished mockery of Courts, and as like Coligny she would not bend, like him she must be broken. The massacre of St. Bartholomew, in which the admiral was murdered, took place very shortly after these events.

Upon the terrace beyond the main building of the castle is the tower with the letters "Uraniae Sacrum" inscribed upon its entrance, in which Catherine consulted the stars with her astronomer, and with the superstition so common to minds of her peculiar nature, inquired the influence of the planets upon her various schemes. Here she plotted the accession of her son, the Duke of Anjou, to the

Maurice, grandfather of Turenne, and great-grandfather of William III. of England.

Crown of Poland, and negotiated, though happily with no success, for his marriage with the English Queen, Elizabeth;[1] here she dreamed of the carnival of death that was to run riot in the streets of Paris, of the murder of Coligny, of Navarre, of Condé, of all who ever crossed her path—horrors which her son's mind was not strong enough to bear.

In 1574 began the fourth reign in which this woman's sinister influence was to play a part, the reign which brings to its crisis the history of the Château of Blois.

Her son Henry had hurried from Cracow on the death of Charles IX., had gone through the disgusting mockery of penitence in the streets of Avignon, and was beginning his cruel and dissipated career, in which enough of frivolous and exaggerated religion was mingled to rob his carelessness of its one excuse.[2]

[1] Elizabeth seems to have been considered a fair mark at this time for all royal matrons with marriageable sons.

There was a scheme afoot at one time to marry her to Henry of Navarre, and join England, France, and Navarre in one great Empire that should recall the dominions of the Angevins. Smith and Throckmorton, the English ambassadors, were in Touraine in 1571, and were spoken to on this strange business.

[2] "Cette vie lâche et méprisable," says Vitet with as much truth as force, "dont une moitié était consacrée aux plus

There is a small staircase leading from the main buildings of the castle into the great hall in which, in 1576, Henry III. convoked the first States-General of Blois. Henry, the famous Duc de Guise, was at the height of his power; with the consciousness that Spain was at its back, he was prepared with the League to combat to the full the powers of the King. The famous Catholic League had been thought of so far back as 1562 by the Cardinal de Lorraine at the Council of Trent; it got its first strength from the Press, and from secret associations in the capital; indeed, although 1572 had given a bloody proof of its existence, the League, until 1576, remained almost a secret society, with meetings such as that into which the reckless Chicot penetrated and gave Brother Gorenflot so great a reputation for his oratory.

But at this time they felt strong enough to throw off the mask, and the King was fairly terrified at the revelation of the extent of their plans. It must have been a sore surprise for the Guises when the King, in a moment of sudden resolution, declared that he himself would head the famous League; and we may be sure that all the Court who

honteuses débauches et l'autre aux plus ridicules dévotions." The best that can be said for his melancholy culture and refinement is said in Dumas' *Quarante Cinq*, and the rest.

Hall of States-General, Blois

dared were laughing at the great man's discomfiture.[1]

The King's resolve is described by his sister Marguerite, who was present at the meeting of the states of Blois; and (says her usual ardent admirer Brantôme) the assembly were even more occupied in studying her royal charms than in listening to the excellent discourses of the King. As a matter of fact the King spoke very well and with much dignity when occasion required it, as it did certainly now, for Guise was only put on his mettle by the temporary check, and was soon moving every influence in his power towards his one fixed aim—the King's abasement and his own advance.

D'Aubigné describes how these first estates at Blois dragged wearily on, with demands for redress of grievances [2] alternating with royal complaints of lack of money, and here and there a murder, to diversify proceedings, in the castle grounds. At last the sessions were over, and while, for the sixth time, the Religious Wars began in the South Provinces, within the courtyard of the château the "mignons" of the King, the D'Epernons and Joyeuses of Dumas' famous drama, were swaggering

[1] "J'ai détrôné mon cousin de Guise (said Henry to Morvillier), me voilà roi des ligueurs à sa place."

[2] Which had one good result, the "Édit de Blois," a sound measure of reform much needed.

in their short cloaks and long rapiers, and sometimes having serious fights in the midst of the dissipation of the Court.

Thus, Caylus, Maugiron, Livarot, and St. Megrin were beaten by D'Entragues, Schomberg, and Ribeirac, in the famous duel that is immortalised in "La Dame de Montsoreau." The King's grief for his favourites was overwhelming, and he built to their memory a magnificent sepulchre, which was knocked down by the people of the capital soon afterwards. Thus, the Sieur de Saint Sulpice met his death at the hands of the Vicomte de Tours behind the archways in the moonlight, while the courtiers were dancing in the brilliant rooms above, and the King, effeminate enough already, dressed as a woman, was simpering at the jests of the first Italian comedians who had replaced the stormy councillors in the great hall of the castle.

Of the private life of the Court at this time, of the exploits of the "mignons," of Bussy d'Amboise, and the rest, of the King's maudlin affections, his little dogs, his mummeries, his effeminacy, his nauseating mockeries of holiness, the chronicles of the time are full; and they are not pleasant reading. Small wonder that so many of Montaigne's essays, first printed about 1581, breathe discouragement and weariness of soul at all this purposeless and

endless vice and debauchery—this ghastly carelessness of life and of its ending, which is the distinguishing mark of the times of the last Valois.

But even the indolence of the King was at last roused by the startling events that were in progress. On the first day of March 1587 L'Estoile chronicles the news of Marie Stuart's execution; tidings followed fast of the gathering of the Armada that was to be hurled against the English heretics, and the result of the struggle was watched eagerly both by the Guises and the King; the King, in Chartres, was in fact in deadly fear in spite of his new bodyguard of D'Epernon's Quarante-Cinq, for, contrary to all orders, De Guise had entered Paris, the city had risen in his favour, the very streets been barricaded at the least sign of opposition, and he was actually on his way to demand his appointment as Constable at the coming session of the States at Blois, which the King was unwillingly obliged to summon in October 1588.

Of the three divisions of the Parliament, only in the noblesse could Henry count on a majority, the Guises held the clergy, and the enormous majority of 150 out of 191 in the Tiers État.

The sitting did not promise to be very gratifying to the royal pride, and the King's mind showed traces of irresolution that did not go unmarked by

his mother and those who watched him carefully. He had dismissed Cheverny, Villeroi and his old ministers, and taken on Montholon, to every one's surprise, with Ruzé, Révol, and others whom he hoped to influence as he liked. A solemn procession was then started round the town, of all the elected members and the councillors of the Court; at last the first sitting was definitely fixed for the middle of October. The appearance of the great Salle des États has been often described; its walls were covered with tapestry, and its pillars twisted with gold lilies upon violet velvet; between the third and fourth was placed a dais with a throne, by which sat the Queen and the Queen-mother. Strong barriers all round kept the spectators at a distance, and on a chair within them sat De Guise, in his white satin doublet, watching keenly all the men of his own party ranged in lines before him. At last he rose, and mounting the private staircase to the castle rooms, came back with the King.

The speech from the Throne was unexpectedly firm and created a great sensation, but its effect was somewhat spoilt by Montholon's tedious discussion, which wandered from Solomon and the Druids to general exhortations to the assembly, and by the time the Archbishop of Bourges had mentioned Nestor and Ulysses, and even dragged in the

examples of Nebuchadnezzar and Artaxerxes, the patience of the house was well-nigh exhausted. The King's friends had done him little good, and the Duke of Guise's popularity became more pronounced than ever; he was proud to excess before, he now became violent and disrespectful. It was clear to the anxious King that his conduct was little short of treasonable; and the jests which the great duke pitilessly flung to all his followers, about the King being more fitted for a cloister than a Court, at last drove Henry's naturally timid and irresolute character to take a desperate revenge.

Personal enmities have always had much to do with the crises of French history, and they were not lacking now to add one more touch to the gloomy picture whose background was shadowed with the struggles of fanaticism and persecution, only relieved by the lurid lights from burning villages throughout the desolated realm of France.[1] The Cardinal de Guise talked of making a crown for Henry with a dagger's point, and the wicked

[1] There were horrible cruelties practised on both sides. See the *Theatrum crudelitatum nostri temporis*, Anvers, 1587, 4to, where the Huguenots are represented torturing men and women with cruelties unspeakable.

The *Oldenburgisches Chronicon*, folio, 1599, shows the reprisals of the other side—confused scenes of pillage and murder, with Catholic soldiers sacking the villages of the Huguenots.

little Duchesse de Montpensier, with her pack of cards in her gibecière, carried on the other side of her girdle the golden scissors with which she had sworn to cut the tonsure for the King when he was made a monk.

Anne d'Este was in the Guises' lodgings, the grand-daughter of Louis XII. and mother of Duke Henry, who married the Duc de Nemours after her first husband's death; his wife, too, Catherine de Clèves, only left Blois on the 17th of December that her child might be born at Paris. His son Charles, Prince de Joinville, stayed with him all the time, and spent his days in matches at tennis and flirting with the maids-of-honour. All over the castle grounds the pages of the rival factions were perpetually quarrelling, and constant duels, in defiance of Court etiquette, took place in the gardens and the town. At every turn the King saw Guisard faces, watching him and hating him, and every day brought fresh humiliations; like Louis XI., he veiled his projects in a still deeper cloak of exaggerated and loathsome cant and superstition; he even took mass with De Guise on the 4th of December, and on the 18th entered with unusual gaiety into the festivities at the marriage of Christina of Lorraine. The Duke affected to believe the hypocritical expressions of the King, or passed

him altogether as beneath contempt, but that very night the murder was first actually spoken of.

Henry's accomplices knew the strength of the man with whom they had to deal; arrangements were made to isolate him from his numerous suite, and a murderer was found courageous enough to strike the blow.

So much ambition and so much contempt could only have one end, but the pride of Le Balafré would only listen to the bolder spirits among his friends; confident in himself and despising his royal enemy, he rejected all the warnings which were showered upon him; a note in his dinner napkin was thrown away unread, and all the vague prophecies with which the air was full were forgotten, or passed over as the idle tales of quacks and prophecy-mongers.

At a supper in the Guises' rooms the position was talked over; the Cardinal and the Archbishop of Lyons were there, De Neuilly, Chapelle Marteau, and without doubt the Duchesse de Montpensier in her white damask, with the pink and green embroidery, and her long skirt hiding the slight defect in one leg. The Duke's mother, too, was full of anxiety at the constant warnings that reached her.

"Paris conjure un grand meurtre commettre,
Blois lui fera sortir son plein effet."

"La cour sera en un bien fâcheux trouble,
Le grand de Blois son bon ami tuera,"

were two of the numberless doggerels that every one was quoting at the time. The Duke was again and again besought to beware of Christmas, "for before the year dies you will be dead," had said the prophet.

But as if his destruction had already been fated by a higher power, his usual prudence seemed for the time to have been cast aside, and even the prayers of his mistress, the lovely Charlotte de Sauves, Marquise de Noirmoutier, could not prevail on him either to strike the first blow or to leave the Court that was so full of danger for him, and the town that was notoriously hostile to the League.

Before the breaking of the storm the King kept outwardly very calm, and occupied his leisure in obtrusively pious celebrations of the masses before Christmas. On the evening of the 22d the last arrangements were made.

At four o'clock the next morning the King, who had not slept all night, was roused by Du Halde. Several of the Quarante-Cinq were hidden in the staircase leading to the King's "cabinet neuf;"

others were disposed in convenient hiding-places along the passages that led from the Council chamber to the royal apartments; others were put in readiness to secure the persons of the Cardinal and the Archbishop of Lyons as soon as the blow had fallen.

The King walked nervously from room to room in the darkness of the December morning, seeing that all was ready, and listening to the chanting of the monks in the alcove hard at hand, who were praying for the success of this cowardly assassination. The members of the Council had been exhorted, the last words of encouragement and warning given to the Quarante-Cinq, swords and daggers even had been served out to those who had none, the ministers were beginning to assemble in the great hall beyond, and still the Duke came not.

De Guise, all unconscious of the imminent peril he was in, had spent the night with the fascinating Madame de Sauves, and only left her at about three in the morning for his own rooms.

It was after eight o'clock when his valets aroused him, saying that the King was on the point of leaving the château, and the Council waited. He walked across the courtyard of the castle to the royal apartments, beneath a dark and threatening sky, " Ce ciel sombre et triste," that was to over-

shadow the last moments of his life. Upon the terrace La Salle and D'Aubercourt begged him to go back, and he crumpled in his fingers the ninth note of warning since the night.

At the foot of the beautiful staircase,[1] beneath the statues and the twining leaves, is a man-at-arms, the Sieur de Larchant, who entreats the nobleman in power for some favour for the Scottish Guard from the King himself, and as the Duke ascends, the steps behind him are closed up with a double file of soldiers, and all the castle gates are bolted. A last message sent him in a handkerchief failed of its purpose, and in another moment he is in the Council chamber, pale and cold with the night air, warming himself at the great fire, eating some plums, and jesting with the courtiers waiting with him.

The pale face of Révol, the Secretary of State, just then showed through the open door, and the message came that His Majesty awaited the Duke in the Cabinet vieux. De Guise put some of his plums in a small box in his pocket, threw the rest upon the table for the councillors, and with an "Adieu, messieurs," to them all, left the Council

[1] Mezeray (iii. 734, fol. 1685) says that Chicot was on the steps, rubbing an old "alumelle" against the window, and murmuring, "Hé j'ay Guise."

chamber; the Sieur de Nambu shut the door behind him.

The miserable King was not in the room to which De Guise had been summoned, and which lay through a narrow passage to the left, but waiting in the Cabinet de travail at the other end of his apartments, trembling behind a door until his cut-throats should have completed their task.

Turning to the left as he came out, the Duke has reached the end of the room that is crowded with his murderers, though he knows it not, for he has bowed to all of them, and gone his way towards the Cabinet vieux; there is a pressure on his foot, perhaps a warning, but it comes too late, and the assassins are close round him.

With a strange feeling of oppression and uncertainty he was half turning back, with one hand on his beard, when he felt the first dagger stroke upon his neck. It was Montféry who grasped his arm, crying, "Traitor, thou shalt die!" At the same time his legs were seized by Des Effranats, Saint Malines stabbed him in the chest, and Loignac thrust him with his rapier through the loins; but powerful still in his last agony, and with a loud cry for help,[1] he dragged his murderers, strug-

[1] "Le premier coup qu'il receut luy faisant regorger le sang dans le gosier, il ne put jetter qu'un grand soupir qui fut entendu avec horreur de ceux qui étaient au conseil" (Meze-

gling, from one end of the room to the other, staggering with arms outstretched, dull eyes within their staring sockets, and mouth half-opened, as one already dead.

At last he fell beside the curtains of the bed. Then came out the King, and with all the meanness of his pitiful nature spurned with his heel the face of the dying man—a terrible reprisal this, for the cruelty of De Guise himself to the gray hairs of Coligny; and the last sigh of the great duke, who rendered up his strong spirit slowly and with almost unconquerable effort, was received by the courtier who was kneeling down to rifle the pockets of the corpse; it was covered with a gray cloak, and a cross of straw was thrown upon it.

In the confusion that ensued among the crowd in the ante-chamber De Guise's relatives were seized, and the tragedy was completed when his body and that of the murdered Cardinal his brother had been burnt within the castle, and their ashes scattered on the waters of the Loire.

Catherine de Medicis died a few days afterwards, and within a year the King was murdered. The sixteenth century ended red with the blood of its chief actors, and the stage was cleared again for a new reign.

ray, iii. 734, fol. 1685). For further details see authorities mentioned in the Appendix.

Blois

CHAPTER XX

BLOIS (*Concluded*)

"Fy de la Ligue et de son nom,
Fy de la Lorraine estrangère,
Vive le Roi, Vive Bourbon,
Vive la France, nostre mère."

"For the transgressions of a land many are the princes thereof."

With the murder of the Balafré the War of the Three Henrys closed, for now that one was dead, the other two fell into each other's arms and combined to crush the party of the League, which still writhed and tried to sting, although its head was gone.

A meeting between the King and Henry of Navarre took place at Tours, and their combined army then moved towards Paris; but Henry III. was destined never to enter his capital again, and was stabbed by Jacques Clement at St. Cloud. With the new reign that begins, the real history of Touraine is over; the Court is seldom in its palaces again; but there are still a few more events

which are of interest before the story of the Château of Blois is done.

After Gabrielle d'Estrées had died and Marguerite de Valois been divorced, Henry IV. brought Marie de Medicis from Italy as his wife. Her magnificent reception and subsequent career are portrayed in the glowing colours of Rubens's great series of complimentary historical pictures; but the connection of Marie with the Castle of Blois was only of the most humiliating description.

The Vert Galant had been stabbed by Ravaillac in the very midst of his pursuit of the lovely Princess of Condé, in the course of which he had threatened to set all Europe by the ears for the sake of one woman, as Buckingham was to do after him; and during the reign of the next King, the sombre Medicean Louis XIII., the position of the Queen-mother had become one of very considerable difficulty. Her embarrassments, political and otherwise, at last landed her in the Château of Blois, and there the King's favourite, De Luynes, showed every intention of keeping her shut up and out of harm's way. The tortuous designs of Richelieu, who had accompanied her, were not yet clear; and he was ordered to leave her household and retire to Avignon. The position of Marie de Medicis became more and more intolerable, for De Roissy,

the governor of the castle, seemed to take pleasure in making her captivity as odious as possible. De Luynes set his mind at rest, and proceeded with his own affairs at Paris, confident that the Queen-mother would trouble him no more. But the numerous political executions, which were at this time constantly taking place, so roused the indignation of the people, that the nobles resolved to take advantage of the crisis and liberate the Queen-mother.

The Dukes of Rohan and Montbazon resolved to effect a reconciliation between the King and Marie de Medicis at all costs. Her friends the Concinis were working for the royal captive, and they had sent the Abbé Ruccelai to manage her escape from Blois. That this was no easy matter is shown by the fact that it took two years to make the necessary preparations. On 22d January 1619 D'Epernon left Metz with a hundred well-armed men, his guards and personal attendants, his jewels, and eight thousand pistoles. His letters to the Queen were carried by treachery to De Luynes, who fortunately disregarded them, and after much uneasiness Marie heard at last that D'Epernon was at Loches, where a refuge had been arranged for her.

On the 21st of February 1619 a certain Cadillac

was walking at midnight across the bridge, when he met some of the Queen's friends who had been sent out to say that all was ready. They all went to the foot of the wall in which her window opened, where much agitated talking could be heard. After great hesitation the Comte de Brienne appeared down a rope-ladder, and Marie de Medicis after him, in an attitude more calculated for safety than for that dignity with which she had been portrayed by Rubens. One ladder was enough for the poor Queen, who had had great difficulty in getting through the window, and was accompanied by only a single waiting-woman; the rest of the descent from the platform to the ditch of the castle was made upon a cloak spread out upon the slope. Friends were waiting at the bottom, and walked her quickly off, one upon each side; but no carriage was to be seen. After a moment of intense anxiety it was found hiding in a side street; then the royal jewels had been forgotten. More suspense till they were recovered, dropped in the haste of escaping, beneath the castle walls. At last the carriage started, and Marie de Medicis was free to begin plotting again with her clumsy Gaston against the astute and omnipotent Richelieu.

Gaston had neither the skill to foil him nor the courage to assassinate him, and no Aramis or Por-

thos was at hand to help, for Monsieur d'Orléans had an evil notoriety for abandoning his friends to their fate without lifting a finger to save them; so he failed as he was bound to do, and found himself sent into exile, after the Fronde had given the final death-blow to his schemes, to the Château of Blois.

Here, in 1635, he was living with his solemn Court; and Mademoiselle de Montpensier his daughter, "La grande Mademoiselle," as she was called, gives a pitilessly accurate account of the wearisome etiquette of the Duke of Orleans' household. "Monsieur dissertoit, distinguoit, Hésitoit comme à l'ordinaire." [1] After both the King and Queen had followed Richelieu to the tomb, the unlucky Gaston heard once more the shouts of "Vive le Roi!" which had grown so distasteful to his envious ears, and the quiet of his Court was interrupted by the visit of the young King Louis.

At the end of April 1644 John Evelyn had come down the Loire by boat from Orleans to Blois, and his diary is worth quoting to describe for us the state of the château at this time. They arrived in the evening, and noticed the "stately stone bridge on which is a pyramid with an inscription. At the

[1] Compare De Retz: "Monsieur n'agissait jamais que quand il était pressé, et Frémont l'appelait '*l'interlocutaire incarné.*'"

entrance of the castle," he continues, "is a stone statue of Lewis XII. on horseback as large as life, under a Gothic state.[1] Under this is a very wide payre of gates nailed full of wolves and wild boars' heads. Behind the castle the present Duke Gastion (*sic*) had begun a faire building through which we walked into a large garden, esteemed for its furniture one of the fairest, especially for simples and exotic plants, in which he takes extraordinary delight. On the right hand is a long gallery, full of ancient statues and inscriptions, both of marble and brasse; the length, 300 paces, divides the garden into higher and lower grounds, having a very noble fountain. . . . From hence we proceeded with a friend of mine through the adjoining forest to see if we could meete any wolves, which are here in such numbers that they often come and take children out of the very streetes; yet will not the duke, who is sov'raigne here, permite them to be destroyed. . . . Bloys is a town where the language is exactly spoken; the inhabitants very courteous; the ayre so good, that it is the ordinary nursery of the King's children."

[1] This is the statue that was destroyed in the Revolution. The old inscription ran—

"Hic ubi natus erat dextro Ludovicus Olympo
Sumpsit honorata regia sceptra manu;
Felix quae tanti fulsit lux nuncia Regis
Gallica non alio principe digna fuit."

Evelyn came too soon to see the streets of the town decorated for the entry of the young King Louis XIV., the great State carriages, huge machines of wood and leather with enormous nails, Genoa velvet curtains and wide wheels; to watch the musketeers in their brilliant uniform, the light blue cosaque with a great star on breast and back, the long-plumed hat, and high soft boots to the knee. The gay procession goes laughing on to the castle, and from the windows in the court above us, which had just been filled with the terrible shadows of the murdered Guises, it was a relief to hear the whispers of that roguish Montalais as she pointed out the young Vicomte de Bragelonne to Louise de la Vallière. Mazarin was adding up accounts in his bedroom on the other side, and the exiled English King was asking D'Artagnan the way to Louis XIV.'s apartments.

But the visit did not last long. Mademoiselle tells us the Court were bored to death, as well they might be; and the King was soon away to meet his Spanish bride, without a thought that the young maid-of-honour he had seen at Blois was one day to hold so tender a place in his impressionable royal heart.

This was the last of the splendour of Blois. Gaston returned to his solemnity and his gardening,

and after his death in 1660 the whole place was dismantled.

Arthur Young, passing it in 1787, could still be shown the details of the Guises' murder, and his eminently practical reflections thereupon are worth transcribing. "The character of the period," says he, "and of the men that figured in it, were alike disgusting. Bigotry and ambition equally dark, insidious, and bloody, allow no feelings of regret. The parties could hardly be better employed than in cutting each other's throats." So far our honest agriculturist, who happily finds much soil suited to his taste farther on in the Sologne plains, and leaves Blois to be still further defaced by the Revolution which followed hard upon this peaceful visit.

In the terrible devastations of 1793 Blois suffered like the rest for its royal recollections, and was as usual converted into barracks; in 1871 it served as an ambulance for the wounded in the Franco-Prussian war; and finally it is restored to-day with an abundance of care and thought worthy of the structure which holds so many memories. The rooms are even too vividly restored, as we have noticed, with brilliant colourings on ceiling and on floor, and gorgeous tapestries on all the walls; but they only need kindly time to soften them again,

and they are peopled for ever with the shadows of their history.

But much as there is for the traveller to see in the great Château of Blois, he must by no means leave the town with only the royal palace explored. He will find numerous churches all well worth his visiting; he will see, most beautiful of all, the Hôtel d'Alluye, where Florimond Robertet, the famous secretary, lived, and from the gardens that slope downwards to the river he will see the other bank of the stream, the country of the Sologne, and the bridge that points him on to Chambord, where Porthos, kindly giant, might have found a home, when Bracieux close by became too small for him.

The history with which these pages have had too hastily to deal is now brought to its farthest point. From château to château we have followed it till the chain that began with the Plantagenets at Chinon is broken with the murder of the Balafré at Blois. The seventeenth century is the century of the intrigues of Paris, the age of Versailles and Fontainebleau, and Touraine is all but neglected by the Court. Yet it is impossible to leave Touraine without visiting the gigantic Chambord, without glancing, though but for a moment, at a few more of the noble houses scattered through the province, without finishing the brief sketch of the

central town of Tours which was begun earlier in this book.

These last things, then, we have left to do, and then bid the traveller wander at his will.[1]

[1] Nearly all the notes from which the foregoing chapters were written were taken during the summer and autumn of 1890. A few changes noticed on a short visit in 1891 will be found in the Appendix. At the present moment (December 1891) I hear that Chenonceaux has at last actually found a purchaser; but there is a loss to record as well; the Abbey of Corméry has been all but completely ruined by the storms.

Chambord

CHAPTER XXI

CHAMBORD

"Ledict bastiment estoit cent fois plus magnifique que n'est Bonivet ne Chambourg ne Chantilly: car en icellui estoient neuf mille trois cents trente et deux chambres, chascune garnie de arrière chambre, cabinet, garderobe, chapelle, et issue en une grande salle."—*La vie très horrifique du grand Gargantua*, cap. liii.

THE road that leads from Blois to Chambord crosses the Loire by a fine stone bridge, which the inscription sets forth to be the first public work of Louis Philippe.

For some distance the rails of a small tramway followed the road by which our carriage was slowly rolling towards the level plains of the Sologne, but we gradually left such uncompromising signs of activity, and came into a flat country of endless vineyards, with here and there a small plaster tower showing its slated roof above the low green clusters of the vines.[1] We passed through several villages,

[1] These towers may very possibly be modern erections connected with the cultivation of these enormous and apparently uninhabited regions, but they are very like the old watch-

whose inhabitants that day seemed to have but one care upon their minds, like the famous Scilly Islanders, to gain a precarious livelihood by taking in each other's washing. On every bush and briar fluttered the household linen and the family apparel, of various textures and in different states of disrepair; and with that strict observance of utility which is the chief characteristic of the French peasant, the inevitable blouses of faded blue were being blown into shapeless bundles even along the railings of the churchyard tombs.

At last we came to an old moss-grown wall, and through a broken gateway entered what is called the Park of Chambord. There is very little of it to be seen now, the trees have been ruthlessly cut down and mutilated, and of the wild boars which Francis I. was so fond of hunting there is left only the ghostly quarry that Thibault of Champagne chases through the air, while the sound of his ghostly horn echoes down the autumn night as the phantom pack sweeps by to Montfrault.[1]

towers which M. Prosper Mérimée reproduces from a fifteenth-century MS., showing the beacons that flamed from its roof, while watchdogs beneath are couched behind an encircling hedge of wattles.

[1] Called in the country the "Chasse du comte Thibault" (le Tricheur), or the "Chasse Machabée." Touraine has also its "danse macabre," the "chasse du roi Hugon." In Poitou there is the "chasse Galerie," with many other examples for

The woods that inspired such graceful reflections in Pelisson's letter to Mademoiselle de Scudéry (1668) have little left of the romantic now; indeed when Arthur Young drove through them a century ago the only reflections they suggest to him are "that if the King of France ever formed the idea of establishing one compleat and perfect farm under the turnip culture of England, here is the place for it." And Paul Louis Courier would have thoroughly agreed with him.

At the end of a sufficiently long avenue, the very ghost of an avenue, which only showed more desolation upon either hand as it advanced, could be seen at last what seemed a village in the air. Gradually the village showed its foundations on the solid earth, and we were soon beneath the shadow of the enormous towers of Chambord, towers of immense girth yet with a somewhat squat expression, which we found out afterwards was the result of the disproportionate elaboration of the upper parts of the building. There are thirteen great staircases in this wilderness of hewn stone, not to mention the numberless smaller ones, and four hundred and more rooms of various sizes; the resulting impression, though we were spared from seeing more

the comparative mythologist of the widespread story of the Spectre Huntsman.

than about a quarter, was that of a vast and comfortless barrack, and as all its sixteenth-century art treasures had perished with the rest of the furniture and fittings in the vast bonfire of the Revolution, the great empty rooms had even less chance than was perhaps fair of showing how far their size was equalled by their comfort.

It is impossible for the uninstructed mind to grasp the plan or method of this mass of architecture; yet it is unsatisfactory to give it up, with Mr. Henry James, "as an irresponsible, insoluble labyrinth." M. Viollet le Duc, with a sympathetic denial of any extreme and over-technical admiration, gives just that intelligible account of the château which is a compromise between the unmeaning adulation of its contemporary critics and the ignorance of the casual traveller.

"Chambord," says he, "must be taken for what it is; for an attempt in which the architect has sought to reconcile the methods of two opposite principles, to unite in one building the fortified castle of the Middle Ages and the pleasure-palace" of the sixteenth century. Granted that the attempt was an absurd one, it must be remembered that the Renaissance was but just beginning in France; Gothic art seemed out of date, yet none other had established itself to take its place. In literature, in

The Château of Chambord

morals, as in architecture, this particular phase in the civilisation of the time has already become evident even in the course of these small wanderings in a single province, and if only this transition period is realised in all its meaning, with all the "monstrous and inform" characteristics that were inevitably a part of it, the mystery of this strange sixteenth century in France is half explained, of this "glorious devil, large in heart and brain, That did love beauty only," and would have it somewhere, somehow, at whatever cost.

Francis I. had passed his early years at Cognac, at Amboise, or Romorantin, and when he first saw Chambord it was only the old feudal manor-house built by the Counts of Blois. He transformed it, not by the help of Primaticcio, with whose name it is tempting to associate any building of this King's, for the methods of contemporary Italian architecture were totally different; but, as M. de la Saussaye proves, by the skill of that fertile school of art and architecture round Tours and Blois, and more particularly of one Maître Pierre Trinqueau, or Le Nepveu, whose name is connected with more successful buildings at Amboise and Blois. The plan is that of the true French château; in the centre is the habitation of the seigneur and his family, flanked by four angle towers; on three

sides is a court closed by buildings, also with towers at each angle, and like most feudal dwellings the central donjon has one of its sides on the exterior of the whole.

Though all ideas of a practical defence are sacrificed to produce a dwelling-house, yet this house is furnished with secret stairways, with isolated turrets, with numberless facilities for what the gallant M. Viollet le Duc calls "les intrigues secrètes de cette cour jeune et toute occupée de galanteries," which kept up the constant semblance of a mimic war. Michelet, romantic as ever, explains the strangeness of the plan of Chambord by the state of mind in which the grandson of Valentine Visconti returned from his prison at Madrid; but the château of Longchamps with the exquisite work of Girolamo della Robbia, which was begun only a year after (1527), seems sufficient contradiction, if that were necessary, to this last theory.

It may well be imagined that Chambord is the parody of the old feudal castles, just as the Abbey of Thelema parodies the abbeys of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Both heaped a fatal ridicule upon the bygone age, but what Rabelais could only dream Francis could realise, yet not with the unfettered perfection that was granted to the vision of Gargantua; for surely never was the spirit of the

time seized and smitten into incongruous shapes of stone at so unfortunate a moment, just when the early Renaissance was striving to take upon itself the burden which was too heavy for the failing Gothic spirit, just when success was coming but had not yet come.

But Mrs. Mark Pattison has pointed out one great danger of criticising the castle as it is now. "Burdened," says this writer,[1] "by the weighty labours of Louis XIV., weakened by eight improving years at the hands of Stanislas Leczinski, mutilated by Marshal Saxe, the Chambord which we now go out from Blois to visit is not the Chambord of Francis I. The broad foundations and heaving arches which rose proudly out of the waters of the moat no longer impress the eye. The truncated mass squats ignobly upon the turf, the waters of the moat are gone, gone are the deep embankments crowned with pierced balustrades, gone is the no longer needed bridge with its guardian lions."

It is only from within the court, where the great towers fling their shadows over the space, where pinnacles and gables soar into the air, and strange gargoyles and projections shoot from the darkness into light, that it is possible to realise the admira-

[1] *Renaissance of Art in France*, vol. i. 55.

tion which Chambord roused when it was first created. Brantôme waxes enthusiastic over its wonders, and describes how the King had drawn up plans (mercifully never carried out) to divert the waters of the Loire to his new palace, not content with the slender stream of Cosson, from which the place derived its name.[1] Others compare it to a palace out of the *Arabian Nights* raised at the Prince's bidding by a genie, or like Lippomano, the Venetian ambassador, to "the abode of Morgana or Alcinous"; but this topheavy barrack is anything rather than a "monument féerique"; it might with as much humour be called a "souvenir de premières amours," as the learned M. de la Saussaye has it. Both these descriptions fit Chenonceaux admirably; when used of Chambord they are out of place.

The praises of contemporary critics may have been more genuine when they drew attention to the marvellous staircase in the middle of the château, which is the first thing to which the guide directs his visitors. This is indeed a gigantic freak of

[1] Chambord is apparently the correct spelling, not Cham*bourg*; from which it would seem that the name is derived from the Celtic "cam" (French *courbe*), from the turn which the Cosson takes at this point, and "rhyd," a ford or passage. Cf. "*Cam*bridge" = the passage over the twisting river.—M. de la Saussaye, *Chambord*, p. 44.

fancy, and worthy of the buildings which contain it, where Gargantua and Pantagruel might have wandered amid congenial surroundings.

It has two openings, and by imagining two huge corkscrews one within the other, whose curves ascend together yet never touch except at their extreme edges, the perplexed visitor strives to understand how it comes about that his companion, who is mounting upward like himself, can never meet him though never be completely lost.

From the country visible from the open top of this staircase, one of the chief ornaments of the roof, it is perhaps possible to assign a reason for the position of the old castle, which is confirmed by a manuscript in the library of Blois. The place seems originally to have formed part of a system which guarded the approaches of the Loire, and made it possible for Joan of Arc to move up the river to Orleans. This old fortress of the Counts of Blois and Champagne passed with the rest of the estates to the family of the Dukes of Orleans, and through them to the Crown, at the accession of Louis XII.; this it was that his successor Francis changed into an unwieldy hunting-seat in 1526. For twelve years eighteen hundred workmen laboured incessantly at the task, and it was handed on to the next reign unfinished.

Here came Francis towards the end of his life, when he sought vainly to forget the fever that was in him by wild hunting excursions throughout his great estates in Touraine, and with him his sister, the Queen of Navarre, his "rare pale Margaret," whose eyes, "ever trembling through the dew of dainty woful sympathies," were anxiously watching her idolised brother in his sickness. It was in one of their conversations that Francis, perhaps grown wiser with experience, echoed Virgil with his lines upon the fickleness of woman. Tradition says that the pane of glass which so ungallantly preserved the words—

"Toute femme varie
Mal habil qui s'y fie,"

was broken by a later King whose philosophy was not yet proof to the fascinations of Louise de la Vallière.[1]

[1] There has been much controversy about this famous inscription. Even the phrasing of it differs in every authority, especially for the second line. There are three proofs from which I have argued its existence. (1) The statement in the *Lettres Inédites de la Reine Marguerite*, Partie 1re; (2) the testimony of Brantôme, an eye-witness, "et l'ayant leu en grande lettre, y avoit ce mot: Tout femme varie" (*Brantôme*, ed. Lalanne, t. ix. p. 715); (3) in 1682 Bernier (*Histoire de Blois*, p. 8) says "l'on y voit cette rime," etc. Whether it was Louis XIV. or not who destroyed it, it exists no longer; and even the signature which M. de la Saussaye considers to be that of Francis is totally unlike his handwriting in the MSS. of the Bibliothèque Nationale.

Charles IX. came here after Francis I. had gone to hunt shadowy boars in the Elysian fields, but there was not much happening at the castle for the next few reigns. Henry IV. found himself far too busy to leave Paris, and too happy at Fontainebleau with Gabrielle d'Estrées, who probably found Chenonceaux far more to her taste when she went excursions into the country.

Later on Louis XIII. was wandering in his melancholy way through the corridors of Chambord, with his arm in that of his favourite for the time being. "Mettons nous à cette fenêtre, Monsieur," he was saying, "et ennuyons nous"—apparently this was the one occupation of a monarch who was more thoroughly bored with himself and others than any crowned head in Europe. "Vexed with a morbid devil in his blood, That veiled the world with jaundice," his very love affairs were so morosely platonic that the Court almost lost interest in their incidents. It was at Chambord that this timid lover, wishing to take a note from the fair Mademoiselle de Hautefort, who had hidden it in her bosom, advanced to capture the missive with a pair of tongs.[1] His father could have taught him

[1] The science of correct dates will very soon make any romance in history impossible. It is argued that because the lady was born in 1616, and Chambord was given to Prince Gaston in 1626, this incident did not occur. Tallemant des

better manners, more gallantry or less of clumsiness.

In the fourth act of Victor Hugo's drama we can see the curtain lifted for a moment upon the Court at Chambord. There is the King, who finds it hard enough to live, without the added trouble of a kingdom, striving to shake off the power of Richelieu, whose scarlet robes so terribly suggest the powers of his office. "La pourpre est faite avec des gouttes de leur sang." There is the Duc de Bellegarde, laughing with the Marquis de Nangis, while a Mousquetaire stands sentinel before the royal door; De Retz is here too, and L'Angely the jester, and the Vicomte de Rohan, who makes a strange discovery behind the arras, for Marion de Lorme is there, pleading in terrible earnest for her lover's life.

Réaux, whom Dumas considers a sufficient authority, relates it; and why should it not have been at Chambord, where tradition insists that the event took place, and where the courtiers who laughed over the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* were still told the story that had lasted to their days in all its piquancy? The place where Mademoiselle de Hautefort hid the innocent epistle had achieved a certain amount of reputation in French literature; Boisrobert writes of a pearl that was equally fortunate—

> "Ne te plains pas du piège où je te vois tombée,
> Riche perle qui fais le plaisir de nos yeux:
> La gorge qui t'a dérobée
> Fait des larcins plus précieux!"

It was not often that so interesting a "scene" took place at Chambord. When in 1626 the castle became the property of Monsieur Gaston, brother of the King, the small Mademoiselle de Montpensier found much innocent amusement in laughing up and down the winding steps of that perplexing staircase, while her solemn father mounted with her to the open lantern at the top. Gaston, with his red beard and sleepy eyes, was probably as mystified as his more lively daughter; but Gaston seldom laughed, and would never admit his perspicuity to be at fault. It would have been fortunate for him, perhaps, if the problem of that staircase had been the only one his dull brains had tried to fathom, or if he had kept to his botanical researches with his physician, Albert Brunyer. His attempts at politics only revealed, by the dastardly abandonment of Chalais, of Cinq Mars, and De Thou, that to his general faults of ignorance and incapacity must be added the severer blame of an unpardonable ingratitude.[1]

But with nothing save a staircase to recommend it by way of frivolous amusement, it is easily intelli-

[1] "Monsieur," says that acute observer, De Retz, "était un des hommes du monde le plus faible, et tout ensemble le plus défiant et le plus couvert . . . il faisait en toutes choses comme font la plupart des hommes quand ils se baignent: ils ferment les yeux en se jetant dans l'eau."

igible that Chambord was no favourite with the Dianes and Gabrielles of the period; and Madame de Maintenon, at a time when Louis XIV. gave the place one of its few glimpses of royal gaiety, seems to have spent her time there chiefly in quarrelling with Madame de Montespan. It was in one of the great rooms on which the staircase opens that Louis XIV. sat, solemn and bored, amid a sympathetically jaded Court to hear the first performance of *Pourceaugnac*. Molière was ill, and Lulli, who had on the instant filled the vacant place, was in despair at the array of long-drawn faces listening wearily before the stage. Something must be done to rouse the King. Our courageous Lulli suddenly bounds across the footlights, and from the débris of a discomfited orchestra joyfully detects the peal of royal laughter that greets this unexpected piece of acting. The play ended in a general applause. *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* was more successful, and at once, as it deserved to be. It is amusing to detect the satisfaction of M. l'Ambassadeur from the Levant, who takes to himself all the credit of the Turkish metamorphosis and superintends the correct Eastern costume and *mise-en-scène* for M. Molière.

In 1725 the luckless Stanislas Leczinski found a home here, to mourn over his lost Poland, and left

an appropriate memory of kindliness and charity among the scattered peasantry of the neighbourhood.

The next tenant was of a very different character. The astonished villagers could now hear words of command echoing from the terrace, and see squadrons of horse wheeling to and fro under the orders of the conqueror of Fontenoy.

Maurice de Saxe, the newcomer, owed his birth to a strange and still unexplained event. In 1695 Sophia Dorothea, wife of the Electoral Prince of Hanover, was sent suddenly to prison in the fortress of Ahlden, and her lover, Count Philip von Konigsmarck, simultaneously disappeared. His sister, Aurora von Konigsmarck, went to seek help from Augustus the Strong, Elector of Saxony, and the negotiations resulted in the birth of Marshal Saxe. After a rough education, he went to France and waited for a chance of fighting, consoling himself in the interval with Adrienne Lecouvreur. He was six feet high, with good features, blue eyes, and black arched brows, and needed only the address which every Konigsmarck possessed to prove himself capable of procuring "consolation" whenever he might need to seek it.

At last, in 1740, came the league against Maria Theresa; and five years afterwards, though he had

just been tapped for dropsy and was carried in a litter on the field, chewing a bullet to ease his raging thirst, he had defeated Cumberland at Fontenoy and opened the way to the Scheldt. He was rewarded with the estate of Chambord, which he forthwith decorated with his captured cannon and filled with his bodyguard of Uhlans, and then proceeded to forget as fast as possible the politics which had given him his chance of victory. "I know nothing about your infernal reasons of state," he cried to the Comte de Maurepas, and at once began to thoroughly enjoy himself after his own manner.[1]

Fêtes and reviews, such as had not been seen since the building of the château, were now the order of the day; and the Marshal would soon have killed himself off in the ordinary course of events, had not an old enemy appeared to save him the trouble. A letter was suddenly brought one morning from a carriage that had just driven through the park. Marshal Saxe at once went out, attended only by an aide-de-camp, and disappeared in one of the alleys branching out into the forest from the main drive. In a short time he was car-

[1] By an actress, Mademoiselle Verières, he had a daughter Aurora who married a M. Dupin de Francueil, and became the mother of George Sand, whom we have heard of already at Chenonceaux.

ried home badly wounded. There had been a duel with the Prince of Conti, who had been his enemy ever since the Flanders campaign of 1747, and the Marshal had been worsted.

The doctors could do nothing for him, and like Rabelais he went with a laugh to seek the "grand peut-être." "Life," said the dying general, "is but a dream. Mine has been short, but it has been a good one."

It is strange that almost the only bit of the old furniture left by the Revolution was the great marble table on which the body of Marshal Saxe had been embalmed. This same outburst of revolutionary iconoclasts came very near pulling down Chambord altogether, which at any rate deserved to remain when once it had been built; and after refusing to sell it to a society of Quakers, who hoped to make use of it no doubt in some pacific schemes of manufacture, they pulled down all the fleurs-de-lys within reach and otherwise mutilated the place, according to the Republican standard. And when Madame la Duchesse de Berry visited it in 1828, she must have been astonished to find the disorder which a few regiments with a proper spirit can effect in the strongest Royalist abode.

Chambord was at this time the property of Henri de Bourbon, who, though he was an exile, took his

title from this estate in France, which had been presented to him by national subscription. The subscription itself is chiefly memorable for the brilliant pamphlet which it evoked from Paul Louis Courier, the "Simple Discours du Vigneron de la Chavonnière." [1]

In 1870 Chambord was garrisoned in earnest by the French, who were as usual taken by surprise by a German attack and compelled to make a strategic movement to the rear. In the next year the Comte de Chambord wrote the famous letter about the white flag of the Bourbons, on one of the few visits he ever made to the estate. "This amazing epistle," says Mr. Henry James, "which is virtually an invitation to the French people to repudiate as their national ensign that immortal tricolour, the flag of the Revolution and the Empire, under which they have won the glory which of all glories has hitherto been dearest to them." The logic of the Comte de Chambord was inevitable and fine, if unfortunate. It ruined the Legitimist cause; but the last of the Bourbons could not, for any reason, have turned his back on the white flag.

[1] The pamphlet begins: "Si nous avions de l'argent à n'en savoir que faire, toutes nos dettes payées, nos chemins réparés . . . je crois, mes amis, qu'il faudrait contribuer à refaire le pont de Saint Avertin . . . mais d'acheter Chambord pour le duc de Bordeaux je ne suis pas d'avis."

The Lantern, Château of Chambord

The Prince's rooms, decorated with the most impossible of tapestries presented by the ladies of France, are exhibited by the guide, and his vast collection of extremely military toys of great perfection of workmanship and detail. There is also here an excellent statue of the Madame Elizabeth who so courageously attempted to save the Queen, and at the last died with her. It is one more memento among many, of the terrible effects of the Revolution.

Our last, and perhaps most satisfactory, visit was to the forest of masonry upon the roof. Chimneys had expanded into monuments and lanterns into mausoleums, yet none of the grace with which the chimneys are treated at Azay or Chenonceaux is visible; nothing strikes the onlooker but a massiveness without much object, in which any beauty of detail [1] is only thrown away.

Only as we began to drive homewards, in the slanting rays of sunset, did the Towers of Chambord begin to look more attractive. The stunted aspect of the masonry became less perceptible, and with the last tint of rose-red light upon its lofty fleur-de-lys, Chambord, as we left it, seemed finer than it had been before. Châteaubriand's poetical

[1] Chiefly consisting in squares and diamonds of slate let into the surface of the stone.

description seemed more justified: the brilliant butterfly of the Renaissance striving to burst through its still visible chrysalis of Gothic traditions, the laced and ruffled head of the cavalier appearing above the strong joints of his armour, the beauty that was sought for and so nearly won, showed clearer than the failure which had at first oppressed us.

The drive back returns to Blois by a different road and we came in sight of the cathedral with a magnificent sunset sky behind it. The darkening river shone with a reflected golden light, while the black towers above it stood out against a bank of amber clouds that faded into violet and gray.

Azay-le-Rideau

CHAPTER XXII

AZAY-LE-RIDEAU

"Ce chasteau est ung des beaulx des gentils des mignons des mieulx élaborez chasteaulx de la mignonne Touraine, et se baigne tousiours en l'Indre comme une galloise princière."

The Château of Azay-le-Rideau was built in 1520 by Gilles Berthelot, a relation of the Briçonnet, Beaune, and Bohier families, to whom Touraine owes so many of its graceful homes. It is remarkable not so much for its history[1] as for its extreme beauty as a type of the pure early French Renaissance architecture, untouched by the Italian influence of Primaticcio. The old fortress-dwelling is entirely discarded, nor is any attempt made, as at Chambord, to unite the feudal fortress to the hunting-seat. While Le Nepveu was actually at-

[1] The name is apparently derived from one Hugues Ridel, one of the knights-banneret of Touraine instituted by Philip Augustus, originally destined to command the road from Tours to Chinon. The old château was taken by the Burgundians in the reign of Charles VI., and retaken by the Dauphin in 1418, to be altogether rebuilt in the next century. Its new owner, Berthelot the financier, was involved in the usual distresses which seemed the inevitable portion of the Beaunes and Bohiers, and died of grief at Cambrai in 1529.

tempting a "tour de force" that from its very nature could but be doomed to failure, the walls of Azay-le-Rideau were rising at the bidding of a perfect and consistent plan. The luxuriant fancy of the architect has given itself free play in making as beautiful a dwelling-place as could be well imagined, and using only those details of the old fortress architecture which gave solidity to the whole while they added to the picturesqueness of its various parts. The old master masons had well-nigh disappeared, and in their place had arisen the brilliant school of Jean Bullant, of Pierre Lescot, of Jean Goujon, who, while Maître le Roux and Le Primatice were working at Fontainebleau, formed in France the strong national artistic Renaissance that remained almost untouched by innovations from the schools of Rome and Florence.

Azay-le-Rideau is built in the form of an L upon its side, with the entrance in the courtyard formed by the meeting of the long arm of the letter with its base. At each corner is placed with exquisite effect a turreted and crested tower, and by an extremely happy turn of the angle of the building which is nearest to the entrance bridge across the river, an effect of distance and beauty of line is secured unequalled among the series of architectural triumphs.

Nor is the setting of this rare building unworthy of the gem it holds. Under the bridge, guarded by two sculptured lions, flow the waters of the Indre, that turn again in graceful curves beneath the windows of the château, and are fringed with banks of pleasant green shaded by limes and cedars. The winding walks lead round towards the other side, past a carved gallery of stone with curved steps leading downwards from the windows to the water, past the corner tower, to the long façade. Here, as in the entrance court, the walls are covered with carved panels, the bands that mark the different stories are accentuated with graceful ornament, the very chimney-tops are decorated with raised broidery, and beneath the deep-cut line of the embrasures, marking the low fall of the roof, the windows set in sculptured frames have their full value and effect. Round the next corner, in the quiet pool, swim the great carp preserved for the table of the Marquis,[1] lazily floating beneath the balcony that looks out upon the water.

Among the trees lies hidden a small chapel, resonant with the rapid waters that fall in silver foam upon each side and rush beneath its stone floor;

[1] The present owner is M. le Marquis de Biencourt, by whom an added grace of tasteful habitation is given to the rooms of Azay.

and from this point a particularly charming view of the angle that holds the central court within may be obtained. It is in this central court that the carving on the walls is brought to its greatest perfection. Worthy in some parts of Jean Goujon's chisel, it gives a singularly rich effect of fretted lace-work among the lights and shadows of the graceful corner towers, and, every pretence of fortification having been cast aside, rises to its highest excellence in the work above the entrance. Mrs. Mark Pattison gives the following description of it: "The first frieze shows bas-reliefs of the salamander of Francis I., and of the ermine of Claude of Brittany, his wife, who lay dying at Blois in July 1524, when this château was in course of building. On the plinth which supports the two windows of the pediment the same devices appear; then a little arcade connects the ground floor with the upper stories, the pilasters and other members of which are covered with arabesques which may challenge comparison for beauty of design with the most exquisite passages produced at a later period."

Azay-le-Rideau should be seen last of the châteaux of Touraine, for as it is perhaps the most beautiful and perfect of them all, so its beauty gains by its association with all that is best and most attrac-

tive; for in the shrine of Azay is gathered the whole gallery of faces of those who have made the history of Blois, of Amboise, of Chenonceaux, of France; and the château, that is happy in its own lack of history and intrigue, gathers up within its sculptured walls the memories of all that was worth keeping of the old life that throbbed and struggled in the larger châteaux, and left them ruined or defaced. If the traveller who has seen the hot sunshine of the summer beat upon the walls of Loches and Chinon, or light up the halls of Blois, is so fortunate as to come to Azay in the cool, clear air of autumn, when the delicate colouring of its carven balconies is framed in the gold and crimson of the changing leaves, he will find, as we found, just such an ending to his own travels, just such a completion to his memories, as his imagination could desire.

No catalogue has yet been made of the most interesting pictures in the château; but among them all should be picked out the exquisitely clear and careful presentment by F. Clouet of the face of Catherine de Medicis. This work is in the Chambre des Rois, where Francis I. and Louis XIV. slept on their various visits.[1]

Among many portraits of Francis I., perhaps

[1] See list of pictures in the Appendix.

that in the first guest-room is the best. There is the long nose, the insufferable smile upon his lips that curl upward satyr-like towards the narrow eyes, the crisp close-cut brownish beard, the pink silken sleeves and doublet. Above him, in stern contrast, hangs the face of Calvin.

But in the salon are the greatest treasures of the whole collection. Here is the charming Marie Stuart in youth, painted with exquisite care and refinement, with her young husband in the same frame beside her; here is the great picture of Henry II. on horseback, with the interlacing letters on his harness that cover the walls of Chenonceaux; here are the haggard eyes of Charles IX., full of the nameless terrors of the wild night of St. Bartholomew, and weighed down in mortal melancholy by the fatal counsels of his mother. Marguerite of Navarre is here as well, and the relentless face of Anne de Montmorency, the stern Constable, Coligny, white-haired and venerable, and the weak revolting countenance of Henry III.

Upon the other wall is the bright child's face of Charles IX. before the plots of Catherine de Medicis had wrecked him soul and body. Near him is the Pucelle d'Orléans and Philip of Burgundy; while Anne of Austria, still striving to be beautiful,

is showing off the "fairest hand and arm in France."

All the ages of French History look down upon us from the panels as we pass. In another guest-room is the beautiful laughing face of Henrietta of England, whose young husband with his effeminate eyes and satin bows had watched us in the room before. Farther on is Mademoiselle de Montpensier in the merry days of her girlhood, too cruelly placed near the great red hat that shades her disappointed face in later life. Near to this is the small bourgeoise head of the Pompadour, next her contemporary Mademoiselle de l'Enclos, everlastingly invincible, and opposite to these the stately figure of Madame de Maintenon.

But the list grows long—of grave and gay, of good and bad, all thrown together as they never were in life, and all for the first time meeting under one roof, never (let us hope) to be separated again.

> "Old faces glimmered thro' the doors,
> Old footsteps trod the upper floors."

There seemed a strange reality about this great company of the illustrious dead. It must have been here that Gautier dreamed of the old manor-house where, as the evening falls, the portraits step down from their frames.

"D'un reflet rouge illuminée
La bande se chauffe les doigts,
Et fait cercle à la cheminée
Où tout à coup flambe le bois.
L'image au sépulcre ravie
Perd son aspect roide et glacé,
La chaude pourpre de la vie
Remonte aux veines du passé."

It seemed no easy thing to step from so vivid a resurrection of the past into the present that was beneath, as we descended towards the entrance hall by the fine staircase, the chief glory of the château, that is panelled with the portraits of the kings of France; and where the towers of the old church [1] showed among the trees beyond the park, we wandered slowly back across the murmuring Indre, and left Azay-le-Rideau veiled in the soft beauty of a golden mist.

"Château du Souvenir, adieu!"

[1] "There are some Angevine traces about the architecture of this church," says Mr. Petit (*op. cit.*), "but the oldest part, now the north aisle, the tower, and its eastern apse, seem, as in other instances, to have constituted formerly the whole church."

Even in the eleventh century, when under the direction of the Abbey of Corméry, this church is spoken of as old, and still shows traces of ninth and tenth century work. There are some particularly curious archaic statuettes and carvings along the front.

The Town of Tours and its Surroundings

CHAPTER XXIII

THE TOWN OF TOURS AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

"Monuments de la vieille France,
Passé plus frais que l'avenir,
Où trouverai-je une espérance
Égale à votre souvenir?"

With Chambord and Azay-le-Rideau the list is ended of those typical castles in the valley of the Loire which must of necessity be visited. The history in which they bore a part ended in the story of the last Valois king at Blois. The school of architecture of which they furnish so many brilliant examples has reached its highest point of delicacy and perfection in the achievement of Azay. It only remains to indicate quite briefly a few of those castles which have been left almost unmentioned. Though of less interest, whether historical or architectural, than those already described, yet they cannot be omitted from the shortest sketch of what can be seen and learned in the extraordinary district between Blois and Saumur which, for want of a more accurate name, I have called "Old Touraine."

Blois, like Tours, is a centre from which it is

possible to do much. Chambord and Chaumont we already know; but there are two other châteaux, Cheverny and Beauregard, within a drive of Blois, which have yet to be explored. After keeping for a long time in the shadow of the forest, the road from Blois reaches the quiet little village of Cheverny, and a short distance farther on passes the old church of Cour-Cheverny with its fine roofed porch; opposite to this is the gateway of the château, which is very large and white and modern-looking, built with pavilions on each side in the style of Versailles, and with the foundations with which Mansard had already familiarised us in the newest part of Blois.

The best pictures are in the grand salon, where is the face of the founder Philippe Hurault, Comte de Cheverny, Chancellor of France in the reign of Henry IV. Opposite to him is his wife Anne de Thou, a relation of the friend of the unhappy Cinq Mars, who perished on the same scaffold. Their daughter is above the mantelpiece, a Scotch-looking woman with black hair strung with pearls.

But the finest work of art in the whole château is the portrait of Cosmo de Medicis when quite young, which hangs on the right hand of the door; it has unfortunately been retouched all round the face in 1827, but is not seriously damaged; the

treatment of the armour and lace, the masterly touches in the growth of the hair round the temples, and the magnificent breadth of the style would almost suggest that, did dates allow of it, this picture was the work of Titian.

In the next room is an excellent pencil sketch by Robert le Fevre of Charles X., with his falling under lip and high-bridged nose. The rest of the ground floor is chiefly decorated with the adventures of Don Quixote, painted on the panels of the gallery and dining-room.

A carved stone staircase leads to the Salle des Gardes above, which rejoices in an extremely well-preserved floor and ceiling, while the long row of tall windows looking out upon the park lights up to the full a room whose fine proportions are unconcealed by any attempt at furniture. The walls only, besides their appropriate decoration of trophies and suits of armour, are lined at the bottom with panel paintings of various flowers, each with a Latin motto. But the most extraordinary room in the château is the small "chambre des rois" beyond, wherein is the first parquetry made after tiles "went out." The walls are completely covered with tapestry and painting, and within this appropriate setting is the "legendary-looking bed" in which the good chancellor died in 1599.

On the left hand of the road that leads back to Blois, in the midst of the Forest of Russy, stands another château filled with pictures, with the appropriate name of Beauregard. There is the same strangely new appearance here as we had noticed at Cheverny, for probably little remains of the old château to which Jean du Thier (as Ronsard tells us) brought home in 1545 the Pindar and Simonides he had saved from Constantinople. The collection of pictures was begun by the minister Paul Ardier early in the seventeenth century, and composes a complete series of fifteen reigns down to Louis XIV., placed in the long gallery floored with tiles that represent a whole army of the reign of Louis XIV.; this must have been much as we see it now when Mademoiselle de Montpensier came to visit De Vineuil here and talked over the intrigues of the Fronde and the doings of the great Condé.

Besides these pictures—there are some three hundred and fifty of them—there is not much to see save a charming sketch by Watteau in the drawing-room, of the Duchesse de Dino, the châtelaine at the beginning of the present century.

Before travelling westward again, there is Ramorantin to be seen, where Louise de Savoie first brought up her young son Francis, and where later

on she saw the comet in the sky that presaged his success at Marignano. Upon the banks of the Cher is Montrichard, one of the many strongholds of Foulques Nerra, and now terribly damaged by the vandalism of 1793; on almost every eminence that rises from the vine-clad plains the traveller

> "Découvre du vieux manoir
> Les tourelles en poivrière
> Et les hauts toits en éteignoir,"

and nearly all are filled with memories of the Fronde; for here the chief actors in those troublous times came to repose a little from the feverish intrigues of Paris, to talk a little quiet scandal, like De Retz, or to lie "perdue" till the storm blew over, like Madame de Chevreuse and many more of the "beautés de qualité," who mixed up politics with gallantry and claimed the lead in both.

From his château east of Loches, between the Indre and the Cher, the Duc de Montrésor would ride across to Tours to talk to Madame de Chevreuse of the impossibility of rousing Gaston d'Orléans to anything approaching consistent policy or courageous support to his allies; or stop at Montbazon, a little farther northward down the Indre, to hear the latest news of Marie de Rohan's quarrel with the Duchesse de Longueville. Of Mont-

bazon little is left now save "the ruins of a castle, built when men knew how to build, upon a rock with turrets lichen-gilded like a rock," and even in those times it seems to have fallen into disrepair, for the family lived chiefly at the Château of Couzières, where the tale still lingers of the terrible end that befell the Duchesse de Montbazon, whose beauty De Retz praises so highly and whose vices even he cannot condone. In a famous sentence he has summed her up: "Je n'ai jamais vu personne qui eût conservé dans le vice si peu de respect pour la vertu."

The last of her lovers was one Armand de Rancé, an ecclesiastic of easy morals, like the Coadjutor himself, who "preached like an angel all the forenoon, and hunted like a devil all the evening." The beauty of Marie de Rohan, perhaps too the strange attraction of her wild and unrestrained abandonment in the pursuit of pleasure, on horseback or afoot, had completely fascinated the Abbé de Rancé; with one last effort to shake off the spell he accepted the chance of employment in negotiations with the Vatican. But he could not stay in Italy; in the groves of the Campagna, in the corridors of the Vatican, the memory of Marie was with him still, and he could not rest away from her. After a hurried journey back he rode to the Château of

Couzières late on an evening, too wrapped up in his own thoughts to see a strange air of sudden desolation in the place, or notice that the servants were in black; he was on familiar ground, and was soon through the side-door and mounting the secret staircase to her room.

There were two candles burning in it as he entered, with a faint light that showed him the duchess lying on her bed; he rushed across the room and kissed her passionately upon the lips; the white face fell from him heavily, and her head rolled down between his feet.

How the unhappy lover fled from the room, with what thoughts of a husband's vengeance, of the terrible greeting that had been placed for him, we know not; but it was Armand de Rancé who was the first Abbé Commandataire de la Trappe, and sought perhaps, in the silence of the Trappiste monasteries, forgetfulness.[1]

It was to Couzières that Marie de Medicis came from Montbazon, after she had escaped from the

[1] Such is the legend: the truth (as far as it will ever be known) is almost as strange. While De Rancé was away a sudden attack of smallpox had killed the Duchess, who was one of the finest riders and tallest women of her time; the coffin that was hurriedly provided for her burial had proved too short, and the corpse could only be put in without its head, which was cut off and laid upon a silver tray; and this was what the Abbé saw.

Château of Blois and had been persuaded to leave Angoulême; De Retz and Luynes had met her at Poitiers, and at Couzières the Dukes of Guise and Montbazon joined them, to witness her reconciliation with Louis XIII., after which the whole Court left, with an exaggerated gaiety, to see the fêtes at Tours.

The château from which the Maréchal de Luynes, the King's favourite, took his title is close to Tours, a little westward down the Loire; it stands upon a hill looking down upon the fields that slope toward the river, and is approached by a fine bridge very like that at Chinon. The place was called Maillé [1] before Louis XIII. had given his favourite the title, and there are still standing relics of a far older time, in the great Roman aqueduct which bore the waters of the stream behind the Church of St. Vernant to the fort which defended the old road to Le Mans.[2]

The name of yet another favourite in the same reign is recalled by the strange Pile de Cinq Mars, a little farther down the valley. An explanation has already been suggested for this strange erection; it may well have flashed signals for the Lan-

[1] *Malliacense Castrum* (Mabille).

[2] These ruins were ruins already in the time of Gregory of Tours, who says of the convent there, "ab antiquis vallatum aedificiis jam erutis."

terne de Rochecorbon to pass on to Amboise, but no reasonable account of its building and design has been as yet forthcoming. Upon the hill a little higher up are the ruins of a château, three round towers, the smallest with a pointed roof, and lower down a smaller tower, detached, that may have been the outworks of the entrance gate. It is appropriate that the memorials of so sad a fate, of so unexplained a character, should be ruins as strange and as decayed as these; De Vigny has told the whole sad story of the sudden rise to power, the hopeless love, the whole career of Cinq Mars, from his leaving home at Chaumont till his execution with De Thou. It is but one more trace of the sinister influence of Richelieu, who built one of the towns in Touraine, with whose memory all these Castles of the Fronde are filled. It was down the Loire that the Cardinal was borne in his last illness, in the vast litter which was carried into the towns at night, where gates built only for an ordinary prince were far too narrow, through breaches battered in the walls, as though by a besieging army. Many breathed more freely in the town of Richelieu,[1] and in all Touraine, when that strong spirit passed away. "Il avait assez de religion pour ce monde," says the broad-minded De Retz,

[1] A few miles south of Chinon.

"il anéantissait par son pouvoir et par son faste royal la majesté personnelle du roi," and it was for this mastery over the King, for this subjection in which he held all France, that Richelieu was chiefly hated in Touraine, one of the last strongholds of the feudal nobility who had opposed him to the last.

We have drawn very close now to our journey's end, to the town of Tours itself. Upon the other side, eastwards, is the tall shaft poised upon a precipice which is known as the Lanterne de Rochecorbon; it is all that is left of the "chastel deschiqueté et tailladé comme ung pourpoinct hespaignol," which Messire Bruyn built when he returned from the crusades to marry his young wife.

The next estates to his were those of the great Abbey of Marmoutier,[1] within which the seven sleepers slept for five-and-twenty years, and apparently remained in unchanged slumber after death. The little cells within the solid rock wherein St. Martin and St. Gatien lived and prayed, are still to be seen; but the modern buildings (of the Sacred Heart) contrast somewhat too sharply with the bygone religious memories which the place unconsciously awakens, and which are preserved in the old door and shortened spire, alone, that face

[1] This word is said to be "*maius monasterium.*"

the entrance. But the impressions of the modern Marmoutier are at least far preferable to the terrible disappointment that awaits the visitor to Plessis-lez-Tours; he must boldly discard the vision that the scenes of *Quentin Durward* conjured up, he must approach with more than one sense blunted to the possibilities of offence, for the abode of the once " dreadful Louis " is reduced to an evil-smelling shed filled with the carts of the night scavengers.

There can still be traced (chiefly in the imagination of the attendant ghoul) the outline and the walls and ditches of the park, the little nook beneath a stairway where Balue was hidden in his cage, and certain problematical and earthly hollows which are supposed to lead by subterranean passages to the town of Tours; at their other end was the house of Tristan l'Hermite; the house that is called his, at any rate exists, and though nearly certainly built in the next century, it is worth a visit for its own sake; for the outside, which is decorated with a twisted cord (at once put down as the somewhat too obvious badge of Tristan's office), has a quiet harmony of colour in the lines of brick and stone; and the little court within, from which rises a tall tower with a winding stair, is a pretty example of the domestic architecture of the time.

The presence of the Court at Plessis, which was not always so offensive after all, was often the occasion of festivities in the Town. Mystery Plays, processions, and receptions often occupied the good citizens, who, as we have seen, were quite capable of taking their part in anything artistic. Their trade, too, flourished; in the birthplace of Jean Fouquet, of Michel Colombe, of François Clouet, the arts were not likely to fall into neglect, and in 1546 the Venetian Marino de' Cavalli notices one branch of industry in which those arts were used, "the manufactories of silken work and tapestry at Tours," he says, "are of the best in France;" the silk from Spain and Italy was sent there, and Venetian workmen were encouraged to come over to teach the Tourangeaux all that they knew of weaving broidery and tissues. In the year before this, just as the right-hand tower of the Cathedral was being brought to its completion, a Royal Charter had been granted for two fairs at Tours in March and in September, at which "silks and cloth of gold and silver, as good and fine as those of any foreign manufacture," were always on sale. These great fairs stopped in 1616, but were revived again in 1782, and still take place each winter and summer along the Quai beside the Loire.

One of the great features of the public reception given to Charles IX.[1] was an arch with an inscription referring to

> " La Soye, honneur de cette ville,
> Donnant la vie aux peuples avec leurs mains."

Immediately after the Colonel of Infantry, in the procession that came out to greet the King, was the Company of Silk-makers clad in black velvet hats with green cord, in leather of the King's colour, pourpoints of " taffetas cramoisy " and black collars. Mercers, armourers, and jewellers followed, and a brave array of butchers " who were magnificently dressed and very brawny men," wearing blue hats and scarlet doublets. Last came the " Sieurs de la Bazoche," the town company of actors, " who had right cunningly secured permission from the Silk Mercers, par une invention rare et magnifique," to wear " taffetas cramoisy," and black velvet hats as well.

The next royal reception was to Henry III. and his mother, in which devices were scattered throughout the town with complimentary refer-

[1] See *La description de l'entrée du très Chrétien Roy Charles IX. du nom, en sa ville de Tours,* par Jehan Cloppel, à Tours par Ollivier Tafforeau Imprimeur demeurant près les Cordeliers, 1565, a rare little book in the Bibliothèque Nationale.

ences to the peace-loving virtues and general amiability of Catherine de Medicis. Tours was at this time in great happiness and prosperity, and Girolamo Lippomano, the Venetian, sends home a glowing account of the pastures and beeves, the wine, the fruit, the corn, that grew in such abundance, the silks and merchandise that vied with goods from Naples and from Lucca.

But the town was not to be wholly untouched by the political and religious quarrels of the sixteenth century. In 1588, certain printers found themselves forced to quit Paris after the disturbances at the end of Henry III.'s reign, and fled to Tours, where they formed a society for the publication of certain works in demand.[1] Their deed and agreement is still in existence.

[1] See "Une Association d'imprimeurs et de libraires de Paris réfugiés à Tours au xvi. siècle. Janet Mettayer. Marc Orry. Claude de Montr'œil. Jehan Richer. Matthieu Guillemot. Sébastien du Molin. Georges de Robet. Abel Langellier." Tours, imp. Rouillé Ladevèze, 1878, 8vo. Their publications are rather rare, and I have only seen two, which are *Recueil de la Harangue faicte à l'ouverture du Parlement*, par M. C. Servain, 1589, and *La Pucelle d'Orléans Restituée*, par Jean Beroalde de Verulle, 1599.

The first Guide-book I can discover for the town and district was published in 1592 by Isaac François Sieur de la Girardie at Tours.

L. Vitet in *La Ligue* gives a list of the many political pamphlets published at this time, in a small duodecimo edition, with narrow margins, and thick type such as the *Machiavel*, printed

The beginning of 1589 was an agitated time in many ways for the town that was so near the place where Guise had been murdered; a more interesting meeting than any seen that century came off in the gardens of Plessis when Henry of Navarre came from the Protestant assembly at La Rochelle, the only one of all his suite who had a cloak to wear or a feather in his hat, the famous "panache blanche" that led the way at Ivry.

The last of the Valois embracing the first of the Bourbons must have been a strange sight for those of the courtiers who had watched the long struggle between the three Henrys; but now Guise was dead, and Catherine de Medicis, his bitterest enemy, was gone, there was nothing to hinder the King of Navarre from coming forward to take his true position. The murder of the King by Jacques Clément still further cleared his pathway to the throne of France, and with his reign the next century seemed at last likely to have rest from civil wars.

Tours itself had not escaped the last efforts of the League—there had been hard fighting on the bridge and in the faubourg of St. Symphorien, from which Mayenne's men were only with difficulty

at Tours, which Henry III. was reading just before the murder of the Duc de Guise.

dislodged, after several churches had suffered terribly from the rude treatment of the defenders of the Catholic Faith.

One more reminder of De Guise's murder remained in a tower of the Fortress by the river—his young son, the Prince de Joinville, had been imprisoned there, and in 1593 escaped with singular daring and success. On his way to mass, he suddenly laid a wager with his guards that he could run upstairs again quicker than they could; he reached his room first, bolted the door, and with a long cord which had been brought him by his laundress, slipped out of window with a bar between his legs, and dropped from fifteen feet. With shots whistling round his ears, he rushed round the walls to the Faubourg de la Riche, where he found a baker's horse and leaped upon its back; the saddle turned round and threw him, and a soldier came up suddenly—it was no enemy, but by a happy chance, a Leaguer who gave him a fresh mount; in a few moments he was past the town and had soon put the Cher between himself and his pursuers.

The town still prospered; and its manufactures had received further encouragement by the Edict of Nantes about 1598. The King had even ordered mulberry trees to be planted round Paris,

Tours, and Orleans, and the first book published on the art of silk-making appeared, by one Jean Baptiste Letellier. But the next century saw a terrible change.

The question of religion now becomes inextricably mixed up with the commercial issues which are at stake, for at the head of the silk-weaving industry were the numerous families of Huguenots who for some time had been flourishing within the town; nor had their presence there been without suffering; so far back as 1544, persecutions had begun in the town [1] of those heretics whose doctrines were first heard of twenty years before. Some of the leading Huguenots were even taken to Paris to be burnt, to serve as a more striking warning to the rest. At last in 1562 came the inevitable result of the massacre at Amboise. In the library at Tours is a horribly faithful representation of the slaying of the Huguenots throughout the town, and even in boats and barges on the river. There was of course vengeance upon the other side, when Condé's army ten years later opened the town again to the victorious Protestants, and towards the end of the century the presence of Henry of Navarre did much to strengthen the Huguenot

[1] See the excellent little work on *Protestantism in Touraine* by M. Dupin St. André, now Minister at Tours.

cause. At last it seemed possible, in spite of sudden outbursts of fanaticism, that the two religions should live side by side. The Huguenots, moreover, had justified their presence by their skill in arts and industries, particularly in the silk manufacture, which was always the staple of commerce of the place.

Suddenly, upon the 16th May, 1685, the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes fell like a thunderclap upon the town. The Huguenots dispersed to Switzerland, to Holland, to the southern shores of England, even to America, carrying the secrets of their commerce with them, and, what was worse, followed by their workmen. Out of a total of eighty thousand inhabitants, fifty thousand went; the silk industry was destroyed or carried across the Channel, to enrich the English at the expense of whole populations of the working French.

It is not too much to say that the town never recovered from the shock; it is only in the last ten years that the old prosperity seems coming back again.[1] Already much of what John Evelyn saw,

[1] The years after the Revocation of the Edict were unprosperous for many reasons besides the loss of the silk industry: it was the time when the inequality and injustice of taxation so convincingly pointed out by De Tocqueville was at its height. Even in 1761 the *Société d'Agriculture* at Tours writes to complain bitterly of the unfair pressure of certain feudal rights on the country populations.

when he came here for nineteen weeks, "took a master of the language and studied very diligently," is gone for ever. "Both the church and monastery of Martin are large," he writes, speaking of buildings which now exist only in name,[1] "having four square towers, fair organs, and a stately altar, where they show the bones and ashes of St. Martin, with other reliques. The Mall without comparison is the noblest in Europe for length and shade, having seven rows of the tallest and goodliest elms I had ever beheld, the innermost of which do so embrace each other and at such a height that nothing can be more solemn or majestical. . . . No city in France exceeds it in beauty or delight." This was written before the Revocation had devastated the town. Evelyn saw, too, the tomb of Ronsard, who died at St. Cosmo in 1585, in the chapel of Plessis-lez-Tours, and was so fortunate as to meet the Queen of England, who was entertained at the archbishop's palace on her way to Paris.

Great efforts had been made to restore the sinking fortunes of the town, and when Arthur Young came here in 1787, he could speak of the "new street (the Rue Royale) of large houses, built of

[1] Save for the two towers, with a waste of street between, melancholy landmarks of the great church that once existed.

hewn white stone with regular fronts," which had just been laid out, though even now several of the owners refuse to incur the expense of filling up the design. "They ought, however, to be unroosted if they will not comply," cries the Englishman. He saw too several fine pictures in the chapel at Plessis, and heard with regret that the corporation had offered the old trees in the Park for sale. "One would not wonder," he reflects frankly enough, "at an English corporation sacrificing the ladies' walk for plenty of turtle, venison, and madeira; but that a French one should have so little gallantry is inexcusable."

But worse things than this were soon to happen. In 1792 the town was celebrating a fête to Liberty, and all the châteaux in the valley suffered in the general turmoil. The citizens were busy listening to the "Hymn to Great Men," to a "Discourse to the Nations," to a "Hymn to Reason," or singing tumultuously after this fashion—

"Les ennemis du nom français
Sur Tours ont formé des projets,
Mais on les attend là,
À Tours on les fera
Voir de vrais sansculottes;
Vive le son
Du canon!"

In 1815 the enemy were at the gates in earnest: the Prussians and the Allies were encamped in St. Symphorien.

But after the fever of the Revolution had somewhat calmed, after the terrible fighting in La Vendée had ceased, Tours began slowly and steadily to recover, in a quiet prosperous time of harvest and repose. These were the days when English most did congregate at Tours. The handbook of 1841 reports two English churches, where not one now exists, and speaks of the trout fishing to be had, and of the seventy English families who throve and multiplied in their new colony among the vineyards.

The war of 1870 seems to have frightened them away. In the autumn of that year Léon Gambetta, escaping in his balloon from Paris, carried on the Government in the Palais de Justice of Tours before the Assembly at Bordeaux was constituted. It was in that winter that the Germans occupied the heights above the town, which was absolutely incapable of making any defence. But the traces of the so-called "siege" have vanished, and the town has resumed its quiet advance towards material prosperity.

The statue of Balzac looks down the Rue Royale he loved so well, towards the Quai where Rabelais

and Descartes look upon the town; behind them stretches the valley of the Loire. It is a fascinating valley, full of history, full of romance. The Plantagenets have lived and died here, the Black Prince has fought up and down the river, Sir Walter Raleigh served his first campaign here with the Protestants, even King Arthur has been heard of at Amboise. Here are scenes that Turner has painted, where Landor and Wordsworth have watched the setting sun; here in the heart of France, in the most French of all her provinces, there seems a special interest for the Englishman, a special beauty in this royal river flowing past Fontevrault to the sea, in this broad smiling landscape clad with vines,

> "Where from the frequent bridge,
> Like emblems of infinity,
> The trenched waters run from sky to sky."

Appendix

Appendix

I.—Itinerary

The traveller may find it convenient to have a few other places in Tours and its neighbourhood pointed out for his especial notice. Information concerning them is easily procurable (especially from the books already recommended), and they are collected here merely to avoid his missing them. Between the two best hotels, the Hôtel de l'Univers and the Hôtel du Faisan, there is very little choice; the first is on the Boulevards not far from the main line station, the second in the Rue Royale: both are good. The Rue Royale (or Nationale, according to your politics) runs straight through the town from the Palais de Justice on the Boulevards to the great stone bridge over the Loire. At No. 39, Balzac was born. On the Quai to the right, in what is now a barrack, is the Tour de Guise. In visiting the Cathedral, the traveller should especially notice the old glass in the choir, the tomb of Charles VIII.'s children, and the extraordinary staircase poised upon the keystone of

an arch, by which he will be conducted to the summit of one of the towers. Two great towers are all that is left of St. Martin's Cathedral and Abbey. Near the Tour de Charlemagne the Cloister of St. Martin must particularly be seen, as one of the finest examples of Renaissance carving in the town. The date of this cloister is given as 1508 in p. 141 of M. Grandmaison's *Documents Inédits pour Servir à l'Histoire des Arts en Touraine*. The Church of St. Julien, too, near the Rue Royale, should be visited: it had been begun by the historian Gregory of Tours in 576, was destroyed in 856 by the Normans, and of the later church little but the western tower of eleventh-century work remains; the present structure is chiefly of the fourteenth century, and has not long been restored to its present state from the terrible decay and disrepair into which it had fallen. In 1817, Mr. W. D. Fellowes, who has published notes of his travels on the way to the Monastery of La Trappe, arrived at Tours and notices its foot pavement in the Rue Royale, "a thing seldom to be met with in this country," though at that time Tours was almost an English colony. The traveller was put up in the "Hôtel St. Julien." In the side aisles of the church were stalls for horses and cattle, the centre was a "remise" for carriages.

The Bank in the Rue de Commerce, where circular notes are exchanged, is the famous Hôtel Gouin, a beautiful example of early French Renaissance. The Hôtel de Beaune, in the Rue St. François, is another example of the same type, and the chimneypiece in the Hôtel de la Boule d'Or must also be seen. The house of Tristan l'Hermite has been already mentioned. In the Place du Grand Marché is a fine fountain put up in 1510 by Jacques de Beaune Semblançay, whose house is in the corner of the same square. M. Grandmaison publishes the details of the fountain's construction from the archives of Tours. Its four blocks of marble came from Genoa. Michel Colombe directed the sculptors, Bastein and Martin les François. It was originally surmounted by a crown and flowers, above which was a bronzed and gilt crucifixion, but all these ornaments have now disappeared. There is an excellent theatre in the Rue de la Scellerie, nearly opposite the best bookseller. Baths in the Loire are to be found on the island which helps to support the suspension bridge; and there is a good library.

At St. Symphorien across the river is a quaint Romanesque cross church, "swamped by a flamboyant nave," with a good western door. At St. Radegonde, farther to the east along the bank,

the church is built against the rock, in which a chapel is excavated that communicates with the tower. The Abbey of Marmoutier is in the same direction. Crossing the river again, on the far side of the town to the south and west the traveller will find Plessis-lez-Tours and the Abbey of St. Como. Still farther out into the country is the Romanesque church of Villandry, which, says Mr. Petit, "combines in itself the chief characteristics one or other of which is found in most churches of this district." The château there, too, with the beautiful flower-beds surrounding it, is well worth a visit. The finest conservatories in Touraine, almost in France, are to be seen at M. Mame's château of Les Touches, near Savonnières, not far from Ballan; there are also some strange grottos, "caves gouttières," in the neighbourhood. Mr. Fellowes in 1817 seems to have made a strangely fragmentary visit. Out of all the châteaux he chose only Chanteloup, Ménard, the favourite home of Madame de Pompadour, and Valançay, the seat of M. de Talleyrand, from which the English Government failed in its attempt to rescue Ferdinand VII. of Spain by means of a certain mysterious foreign baron.

One more excursion may be advised, to the Château d'Ussé, now in the possession of the Comte

de Blacas, the heir of Madame la Comtesse de la Rochejaquelein, an exceedingly picturesque old pile in well-kept grounds near the junction of the Indre with the Loire. There are some interesting rooms and some good pictures, especially in the *Gallerie de Vauban.* The greatest treasure there is what is known as the " Buste d'Ussé," a Florentine work of the late fifteenth century; it formerly was in the collection of the famous Fouquet, and M. Léon Palustre considers that it represents Hercule, Duc de Ferrara (1471–1505). In any case, it is one of the finest pieces of portrait sculpture to be seen in Touraine, not excepting the bust of Francis near Loches, and it should on no account be missed. Many places might yet be mentioned, but the typical château and churches have been pointed out, and in the map, which shows only a few details for the sake of being quite clear, their relative position and accessibility can be quickly seen. Further information can be easily procured, and as to railways the useful *Guide Bijou d'Indre et Loire* may be safely and profitably used. The inns are almost uniformly good and clean.

II.—Manuscripts and Books

The town is particularly fortunate in the abundance of Manuscripts and Documents which it possesses. In the Archives Départmentales d'Indre et Loire, kept in the Prefecture, are great quantities of title-deeds and records preserved from the old religious houses, among which is the grant of Louis le Débonnaire in 837 to found the Abbey of Corméry, with a seal attached, a deed of Hugh Capet, and other treasures; in the Hôtel de Ville are the Archives Communales, which are among the most important in France. Mgr. Chevalier gives a list of their contents. Detailed accounts of parish expenses since 1358 are preserved, municipal documents since 1408, and numbers of letters and other manuscripts from 1140 onwards. The political archives stretch fairly continuously from the English occupation in 1347 to 1815 and Waterloo. Many most valuable facts with reference to the old Mystery Plays and theatrical representations are also to be found here (copied by M. André Salmon), and the diligence of M. Grandmaison has brought to light all that is known of the Clouets, and especially of Jean Clouet II., whose illuminated Livy is preserved in the town library, which also contains the *Hours* of Charles V. and of Anne of Brittany, a

thirteenth-century Terence, and many other rarities. But the librarian shall describe them himself. "La Bibliothèque de Tours, installée rue Nationale 90, dans les bâtiments de l'ancienne fabrique royale de soieries (lampas et damas de Tours), contient aujourd'hui cent mille volumes environ. Ils proviennent, en grande partie, des librairies ou bibliothèques des abbayes et couvents qui existaient autrefois à Tours. Notons particulièrement les riches et précieux fonds des Bénédictins de l'abbaye de Marmoutier, des chanoines de la collégiale de Saint Martin, et de l'église métropolitaine de Saint Gatien. Dans la série de Manuscrits, au nombre de près de 1800, on remarque plusieurs *Sacramentaires*, sortis de l'École d'enluminure et de calligraphie à Tours, fondée par le célèbre Alcuin au VIII^me^ siècle. L'un d'eux, écrit en lettres d'or sur magnifique vélin et remontant au VIII^me^ siècle, est l'évangéliaire sur lequel les rois de France prêtaient serment lorsqu'ils étaient reçus abbés honoraires de Saint Martin." This MS. was collated in 1884 with that in the British Museum; it is one of the finest specimens of its kind in the world, and in almost perfect preservation. A MS. of Ovid has also been published by the Clarendon Press in 1888, and a Hebrew Bible of the fifteenth century was annotated in 1884.

"Dans les documents liturgiques d'un grand intérêt," continues M. Duboz, "on remarque un Missel à l'usage de l'église anglicane (*sic*); ce manuscrit, qui a appartenu primitivement à la famille de Hungerford, devint la propriété des seigneurs de Bueil. Notons encore un ravissant manuscrit persan contenant les poésies de Hafiz, intitulées 'Le Divan.' Enfin d'importants documents sur l'histoire de la Touraine, copiés dans divers dépôts publics de l'Angleterre, sont aujourd'hui conservés dans cette bibliothèque, qui n'est pas moins riche en éditions du commencement de l'imprimerie; elle possède plus de 400 *Incunables*, parmi lesquels se trouvent un superbe exemplaire de la Bible de Mayence (1462), un exemplaire unique des 'Coutumes de Touraine,' et un magnifique Missel sur vélin à l'usage de Tours (1485)." The library is open every week-day (except fête-days) from 1st April to 30th September from 12 till 6; from 1st October till 30th March from 10 A.M. till 4, and from 7 P.M. till 9.30.

III.—Pictures

The valley of the Loire is peculiarly rich in pictures by Jean and François Clouet and their school. At Chenonceaux, among many other valuable portraits, is a fine Catherine de Medicis

and a clean-shaven monkish-looking head of Henry III. At Azay-le-Rideau is the richest collection of all—another Henry III., dressed very much like a woman, an excellent half-length of Charles IX., and many other examples of the Clouets, of De Brissac, and Corneille de Lyon; best of all is the equestrian portrait. Mrs. Mark Pattison has described it as follows. "The King is represented about half life-size on horseback. He wears a rich Court costume of black relieved by white, and the trappings of his horse show the same colours. . . . The sombre figure of the mounted King, swarthy, difficult of speech, gazing outwards with concentrated intention, habited in black, and set in a framework of gray half tones, haunts the recollection with the vividness of actual vision; for the subject, which seems to offer in itself weird suggestions of a phantom magic, is realised with tangible definiteness of conception, and rendered with unflinching fidelity to the solid aspect of real life." Other fine pictures in the collection of the Marquis de Biencourt at Azay-le-Rideau are the portrait of Ambroise Paré, surgeon of Henry III., in the library, and of Monsieur, brother of Louis XIV., in the same room. At my last visit to Azay-le-Rideau, almost a year after Chapter XXII. was

written, there were a few changes in the arrangement of the pictures, which will be noticed in comparing my description of them with what a visitor may be shown at present. Clouet's "Catherine de Medicis" (for instance) is now removed to the upper rooms. A few more pictures in this same treasure-house of art should also be noticed. Next to the Clouet of Charles IX. is another by the same artist and with the same green background, of Odet de Coligny. Other examples of F. Clouet are the "Claude, wife of Francis I." and the "Henry VIII. of England"; pictures of this school are "La Reine Margot" and "Marguerite de Navarre." There are also some exceptionally fine bronze medallions in the lower passage, representing Catherine de Medicis, Henry II., Charles IX., and Henry III. In the private room of M. le Marquis de Biencourt are Marie de Medicis, perhaps by Rubens, the Maréchal de Luxembourg, and Turenne by Champagne, whose finest example here is the Marie de Medicis on the lower floor. The portraits of Marie Leczinska (in red) and her husband are also good, and there are several copies of Cardinal Fleury with the same placid smile, and soft white cloak excellently rendered; with many more which well deserve a closer inspection than will be possible for most travellers.

The pictures at the Château of Cheverny must also be seen. The immense gallery of historical portraits at Beauregard are remarkable more for their interest and variety than for any especial artistic merit: they leave the impression of having all been done by the same hand. The series begins upon the wall in which the entrance door opens, and at the spectator's right hand of that wall, beginning at Philippe de Valois, born in 1328, and going from right to left entirely round the room. They are roughly divided into reigns by divisions in the panels. In the second division are Philippe de Commines, Cæsar Borgia, and a good portrait of Anne de Bretagne looking fat and comfortable, but determined; in the third division are the Cardinal d'Amboise (very different from the more spirited likeness at Chaumont) and Amerigo Vespucci; in the fourth, Florimond Robertet is the best. There is also a portrait of Sir Thomas More. In the fifth are "François Pisarre" and Diane de Poitiers; in the sixth, Jehan Destre, "Grand Maistre d'Artillerie" with a beard like a puff of smoke; in the seventh, Marie Stuart in a high collar; in the eighth, Henri de Guise and Francis Drake; in the ninth, Elizabeth, Queen of England, in old age, and what is perhaps the best piece of work in the room, a large Henry IV. on horseback, with his good-

natured face and gray beard beneath a most strange helmet, surrounded by D'Arnaud, Biron, and Sully. The tenth and last division has a portrait of the famous " Duc de Bukinkan," a very feeble production after the handsome face of Villiers at Hampton Court. In the museums at Blois and at Tours there are also a very few good pictures which must be picked out from a mass of inferior painting.

Of the historical portraits in the École Française at the Louvre Galleries in Paris only two can be ascribed with certainty to François Clouet. Among all the examples of the École Clouet, the two finest are those numbered 107 and 108 in the catalogue edited by M. Frédéric Villot. The first is that of Charles IX., a small full-length figure, three-quarter face, with black coat buttoned to the ruff and embroidered with gold; the right hand, carrying his gloves, rests on the back of a red velvet sofa; two green curtains form the background: a copy of this, life-size, exists in the Imperial Gallery at Vienna. The second is the portrait of his wife, Elizabeth of Austria; her head is turned to the left, three-quarter face, the hair lifted up from the forehead; she wears a rich gold necklace, and a dress of cloth of gold embroidered with precious stones. These two portraits may be taken as types of François Clouet's style, in distinguishing copies from

the few productions that are left of this master's actual handiwork. No. 109, a head of Francis I., of extreme delicacy and accuracy of presentment, is also probably by a Clouet, but whether by Jean or by his son François cannot be determined; it looks as if the basis of the painting were a thin gold or silver background on which the surface tints were afterwards applied. In the same room is another portrait of Francis I., two of Henry II., one full length, the other of smaller size, perhaps a copy, wearing the medallion of the Order of St. Michael and the same black dress striped with gold. No. 113 is François de Lorraine, Duc de Guise; No. 124 is Catherine de Medicis. Note also No. 732, Gaspard de Coligny; 729, Charles IX.; and 653, "le très victorieux Roy de France, Charles VII.," a repulsive face beneath a hideous hat. No. 656 (a ball at the Court of Henry III.) will give a good idea of the costume of the latter half of the sixteenth century. These last are all by unknown artists.

It may help to complete this note if I mention very briefly a few places in England where pictures by the Clouets and their school exist, or where the portraits of persons connected with Touraine may be seen. First and foremost is the great collection at Hampton Court, which contains Eleanor of

Spain, wife of Francis I., by Jean Clouet (No. 561 in the Catalogue published by Mr. Ernest Law), and a Francis I. attributed to Holbein, which Mrs. Mark Pattison considers to be by a French hand (No. 598 in the same Catalogue). This portrait gives an extraordinary sense of nakedness; the complexion is of an almost porcine pink, and the expression brutal. There is also a portrait of a boy, attributed to Janet, described as the Dauphin François, son of Henry II. The writer already quoted considers this to be Henry III. in youth, and says, "Perhaps the whole of François Clouet's work does not afford a better example than the Hampton Court portrait, of that art of giving life which was attributed to him in chief by his contemporaries." In the same collection note No. 342 (in the Catalogue above quoted), the meeting at the Field of the Cloth of Gold; No. 407, Louis XIII., by Belcamp; No. 411, Marie de Medicis, by Pourbus; No. 418, Henry IV., by the same artist; No. 566, by Janet, of Francis I. and a lady, variously described as Diane de Poitiers, and as his wife Eleanor (No. 561), already mentioned; No. 582, La Belle Gabrielle; No. 592, a French nobleman, holding a copy of Petrarch, by Holbein, with long straight nose and narrow eyes, a close brown beard, black cape, and a low black round cap; No.

617, Marie de Lorraine, mother of the Queen of Scots, just misses being clever, and perhaps suffers by contrast with the magnificently beautiful portrait in No. 622.

At Hatfield the finest picture is the "Mary Queen of Scots," by P. Oudry, 1578; there is another of the same princess, in a Brabant costume, that is pretty but not authentic. Other paintings are François de Chatillon; Seigneur d'Andelot, a copy after Pourbus; Louise de Lorraine, Queen of Henry III.; Henry III., King of France, by F. Pourbus; Catherine de Medicis, a copy after Clouet; Henry, Duke of Guise, a copy, with a large and realistic scar on the left cheek; and Henry III., another copy, after F. Pourbus. The best examples of art at Hatfield are portraits which have no connection with the present subject.

The pictures with which we are concerned at Stafford House are all much finer. There are a good Henry III., Jeanne d'Albret, Catherine de Medicis, and François, Duc d'Alençon, all by François Clouet; and a Francis I., with his sister Marguerite, by Jean Clouet. At Castle Howard are other examples of the same school.

The portrait of Marie Stuart, reproduced in Chapter XIV., is from a painting. There is a chalk drawing of Marie Stuart, at the period of her mar-

riage to François Dauphin of France in 1558, which was taken from life by "Jannet" or François Clouet, who became "peintre du roy" after the death of his father the second Jean Clouet in 1541. A larger photograph by Braun of this drawing is now in the National Portrait Gallery, and according to the Catalogue revised by Mr. Lionel Cust in 1896, it was the sketch for a finished miniature painted by the same artist, which is now in the royal collection at Windsor Castle, and was in the possession of King Charles I. at Whitehall in 1639. The original drawing is in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris, and was formerly in the Bibliothèque Sainte Geneviève. This François Clouet was probably at Tours before 1523, when his father Jean (from whom he inherited the name of "Jannet") left Touraine for Paris. For the work of the Clouets, see Mrs. Mark Pattison, *op. cit.*

There is a view of Chambord in an old collection of prints bound together in the Library of Wadham College. It is catalogued in the British Museum (the only other place where I know of its existence) as "*Veües des belles maisons de France* (les places, portes, fontaines, églises, et maisons de Paris; veües des plus beaux endroits de Versailles; diverses veües de Chantilly) designées et gravées par Perelle." (Paris, 1685,

obl. 4to.) Brit. Mus. 564, f. 1. France, pt. 1, f. 136, b.

In conclusion there are drawings by Étienne Delaulne in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, mentioned by Mrs. Mark Pattison. Among them occurs a profile of Marie Stuart, the reverse of a piece struck at the accession of her husband, Francis II. There are also coins for the reigns of Henry II., Francis II., Charles IX., and Henry III. The book is labelled as by Le Petit Bernard, and formed part of the Douce collection.

IV.—Authorities

It may be useful for purposes of reference to insert a few more authorities which have not been previously mentioned.

Among guide-books—*La Loire*, by Touchard Lafosse (1856), a large work in five volumes; *Touraine* (including a bibliography), by Bellanger; *Feudal Castles in France*, by Mrs. Byrne; *Historic Châteaux*, by A. B. Cochrane, M.P.; a *Handbook of Tours*, published in 1841; *La Cathédrale de Tours*, by Mgr. Chevalier; *Le Château de Chambord* and *Le Château de Blois*, by M. de la Saussaye; *Langeais*, by Maurice Brincourt, with drawings by Roy; *Loches*, by the Abbé E. Hat; *Le Château*

d'Amboise, edited by M. Guilland Verger, Tours; *Lettre à M. de Caumont sur une Excursion en Touraine*, by M. de Cougny, and several other works by Mgr. Chevalier; *Fontevrault*, by M. Malifaud.

In periodical literature there has lately appeared an article on "Castle Life in the Middle Ages," in *Scribner's* for January 1889, by the two Blashfields, who contributed "The Paris of the Three Musketeers" to the same magazine for August 1890. In the *English Illustrated* for February 1891, "Thoughts in Prison," by Mrs. Watts Jones, contains a careful copy of nearly all the best inscriptions in Loches. In *Harper's* for June 1891 is a short article by Louis Fréchette on Blois, Chambord, and Amboise.

Of contemporary authorities, it has already been pointed out that the numerous works published under the auspices of the École des Chartes are of the highest value. For the Italian history, and much else of interest in the reigns of Louis XI. and Charles VIII., the history of Philippe de Commines has been used. Throughout, the works of Villon, Rabelais, Clement Marot, Ronsard, Regnier, Dumas, Balzac, De Vigny, and the pamphlets of P. L. Courier, illustrate in their own way the manner of the time. There is far more historically accurate

matter in many of the novels of Dumas than he is often credited with; his fidelity, in particular, to the old *Mémoires* is astonishing, though he has not always so freely acknowledged the sources of his narratives as in the reference to the *Mémoires* of the actual D'Artagnan prefixed to his *Three Musketeers*. The picture of the sixteenth century given in the older trilogy—*La Dame de Montsoreau*, *La Reine Margot*, and *Les Quarante Cinq*—is a very accurate one. *Les Deux Dianes* touches on events in the reign of Henry II., and contains a vivid and fairly true relation of the "Tumult of Amboise," which is again described in Balzac's *Catherine de Medicis*. De Vigny publishes with great care many of the manuscripts and evidences for the story of the conspiracy of Cinq Mars and De Thou, in his romance of *Cinq Mars*.

For the best idea of Mary Queen of Scots, the "Marie Stuart" of French history, see the article on her life and character in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, which is perhaps the finest piece of short biographical work ever written, and has been republished, with an important additional note, in Swinburne's *Miscellanies*, p. 323.

For further details as to the Abbé de Rancé, whose "tragical history" was shortly sketched in Chapter XXIII., see the *Mémoires of the Count de*

Comminges. As to the Trappistes, see *Réglements de l'Abbaye de la Trappe*, par Dom Armand de Rancé, and the narrative of Dom Claude Lancelot, 1667. Mr. W. D. Fellowes, in *A Visit to the Monastery of La Trappe* in 1817, etc., says that the inscription on De Rancé's portrait there runs as follows:—" Mort en 1700 à près de 77 ans et de 40 ans (*sic*) de la plus austère pénitence." This would give his age approximately at the time of the episode mentioned in the text. The Monastery of La Trappe is one of the most ancient abbeys of the order of Benedictines, established in 1140 by Rotrou, Comte de la Perche, as a thankoffering; by 1660 its monks not only lived in luxury, but were so famous for their scandalous excesses of every kind, that they were called the Banditti of La Trappe. It was to these men that De Rancé came and *reformed* the abbey (which he had the reputation of actually founding), by introducing the terribly austere rules for which the order is famous. De Rancé himself gives an interesting account of the first of the many visits of the unfortunate James II. to the Monastery in 1690. In Champfleury, *Histoire de la Caricature*, there is much interesting matter with reference not only to published sketches but to architecture, and even dramatic performances, during the period I have chiefly dealt with.

In connection with these latter, he quotes a long passage from De Thou's *Mémoires* describing the entry of Francis II. into Tours after leaving Amboise; both places, as we have seen, were famous for their *Mystery Plays* and allegorical representations, and on this occasion an imaginative baker equipped his son in a manner more likely to amuse the spectators than to gratify the Court: "tous disoient que cette représentation étoit une vive image de l'état du royaume, gouverné par un roi encore enfant, qui avoit pour ministres des étrangers qui l'avoient rendu aveugle." See also *La Satire en France au Moyen Age*, by C. Lenient; and for another account of the beginning of the fifteenth century, which should have been mentioned earlier, see the edition by M. de Viriville of the *Chronique de la Pucelle*, by Guillaume Cousinot; an earlier writer of the same name wrote the *Geste des nobles Francoys*, etc., MS. 10,297 in Bibl. Nat. The *Journal du Siège d'Orléans* in 1428 might also be added.

Passing to later authorities in the sixteenth century, the year 1588 almost claims a bibliography to itself. The most complete account of the murder of Guise, and the surrounding circumstances, is given by *François Miron Médecin du Roy Henry III.* Other authorities are the *Mémoires de l'Estoile*,

Sully's *Économies Royales*, and the *Chronologie Novennaire* of Palma Cayet. Further details will be found in "*Agréable Récit* de ce qui s'est passé aux dernières barricades de Paris," 1588; "*Nouvelles de la Cour*, escrites de Blois, Lundy dernier, dix septième jour d'Octobre," 1588 (which contains the election lists); "*Harangue prononcée par Monsieur de Bourges* aux trois estats assemblez au chasteau de Blois le jour saincte Catherine 25 Nov. à quatre heures du soir," 1588; "*Discours de ce qui est arrivé à Blois* jusques à la mort du duc et du Cardinal de Guise," 1588 (by a Protestant); *Le Martyre des deux Frères*, 1589 (by a Catholic). In *La Ligue*, by L. Vitet, vol. i. p. 320, are details of the exact costume of men and women at the time. More information may be found in the *Bibliographie* of Monod.

V.—Note to the Third Edition

One of my critics was kind enough to point out (in the *Spectator* some years ago) that the architect of the staircase at Blois (described on p. 139 of this volume) might have had a *naturally* reversed shell directly to his hand and eye. Such conch, chank, or sankha shells are not unknown; they are called *dakshina varta*, "right-twisted," and used to be

worth their weight in gold, as holiest cosmic symbols, to the Hindûs. They now cost some four or five pounds in India. To this I will only add that on some future occasion I hope to be able to treat the whole subject of this spiral staircase, and of others like it, in a manner more complete than is possible in a book of which architectural questions form necessarily but a small part.

Note

As the "dernier mot" (in English) upon French art, I insert part of the speech of Sir Frederick Leighton to the students of the Royal Academy (*The Times*, 11th December 1891):—

The French Renaissance

"And now we turn to a wholly new phase in French art, the expression of a new order of ideas and of materially altered social conditions. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the prestige of the fighting nobility had suffered much through the introduction of artillery and the reverses of the English wars; the middle classes, on the other hand, had, under the favour of the kings, steadily risen in importance. Before the end of the fifteenth century the printing press had begun to scatter knowledge far and wide. The discovery of a new continent across the Atlantic was stirring the imagination of the Old World. But it was a discovery within that Old World which was to exercise the deepest influence on the intellectual con-

dition of France, the discovery of Italy, through the expeditions of Charles VIII. and Louis XII., for a discovery it may be called, though it must not be assumed that Italian influence was entirely absent in France until that period. Already in the middle of the fifteenth century, René of Anjou, himself a painter and the friend of the leading humanists of his time, had made his Court at Tarascon a centre of culture and of art, and employed the labour of Italian artists. Within the first half of the century, too, a great painter, Jehan Fouquet, had brought back from Italy a marked leaning to the new classic spirit. Nevertheless it was not until the return of the romantic stripling, Charles VIII., with the flower of the French nobility from his futile and fantastic campaign that the desire for all things Italian took wide and lasting hold of the French—at least, among the nobility—and this enthusiasm, further whetted during the chequered campaigns of his successor, Louis XII., grew at a rapid pace. It was not, however, till the second decade of the sixteenth century that, through the example of that brilliant dilettante, Francis I., the Italian contagion showed important results. Within the thirty-five years of his reign a host of palatial buildings were raised in a new style, which, if it had not, as had the style it pushed

aside, the virtue of indigenous growth, was certainly marked by extreme charm and beauty. It was not, I say, of spontaneous growth, but neither was it a wholly alien product, for the people from whom it was adopted had in past times left on the more vivacious Gallic stock distinct traces of its blood, and the French have not ceased to this day to claim kinship with the Imperial race. Meanwhile, borrowed though the new style was, the French at once moulded it to their own genius, and produced a result distinctly personal to themselves; and the modifications they introduced in the Italian style were just such as you would expect from the different temper of the race. The restrained and sweet gravity which delights us in the purest examples of trans-Alpine Renaissance is, it must be admitted, too often wanting in the French work of the same class; and if, as I believe, the rank of the work of art is according to the dignity of the emotion it stirs in the beholder, then the creations of the great Italians rise to a higher level than those of the artists of the French Renaissance. For vitality and variety, on the other hand, for exuberance of fancy, for resourceful ingenuity of construction, and for a delicate sense of rhythm and proportion, the superiority of the work of the French is, in my opinion, conspicuous. Above all

things, *it is their own*, and for this reason it seems to me that the jealous investigation which has been noticeable in recent times in France as to how far Italian arts have been unduly credited with the building of certain of the masterpieces of the Renaissance in that country is, however valuable in the interests of truth, of no great moment to the dignity of French art. Close study of documents has led, as is well shown, for instance, in Palustre's beautiful instalment of a *History of French Renaissance*, to the dismissal of claims hitherto advanced in various cases in favour of Italian artists; it is bringing into greater prominence the names of native *maistres maçons* whose claims had been underrated, men who had inherited traditions which made them greatly superior, as builders at all events, to the artists who came amongst them from beyond the Alps. But, apart from such inquiries, it is patent that all but every work of the French Early Renaissance, however it may have originated, bears the unmistakable stamp of the fusing energy of French genius. That the style was not born in France is a fact no one can challenge; that it was recast in that country into a distinctly French thing no narrowness could dispute.

French Domestic Architecture

The keynote of the Renaissance movement being the assertion of the beauty of life and the dignity of man, its influence was naturally most felt in connection with secular life. The great era of church building was past, and, indeed, for a population reduced by long and wasting wars the existing places of worship were not insufficient. The main determining motive of artistic activity under Francis I. was the ambition of the King and his nobles to multiply places of delight for their residence, especially in the country, and to replace by sights of beauty, such as they had learned to love and covet in Italy, the moated gloom of their ancestral châteaux, built and well suited for purposes of protection and defence, but little in harmony with the tastes of the pleasure-loving Court and the light-hearted young King who led it. Prodigious and breathless was the activity with which châteaux were raised, first in the Royal province watered by the Loire, and then in and about Paris. It would be fruitless to enumerate at length even the chief of the stately buildings which from that time to the death of Henry III. occupied the energies of French architects; nor can I do more here than name a few of the foremost of these considerable men, such as in

the first line Jean Bullant and Philibert de l'Orme; and in the second, Colin Biart, Pierre Chambiges, Pierre Nepveu, *alias* Trinqueau, Gadier, Le Prestre, and Hector Sohier. It will be more profitable to note a few points in connection with the evolution of the style itself. Although, as I have said, the great outburst of activity in the new direction coincides with the reign of Francis, Italian influence had already begun to assert itself in architecture as in other things in the preceding century, through Charles VIII., at Amboise, for instance, and more effectually under his successor, who built the east wing of the Château de Blois.

. . . . . .

In the case of secular buildings the transition from the later Gothic was facilitated by the fact that square-headed openings prevailed already in that style, of which, too, the incontinence in ornament was acceptable to the exuberant spirit of the new art. The character of that ornament, however, was entirely changed; fantastic, foreign arabesque took the place of the floral decoration which had been one of the glories of the French school. Meanwhile the love for aspiring forms lived on, and the tendency to complexity died hard. The wealth of sky-line produced by spires and pinnacles was perpetuated in high-pitched roofs, turrets, and tall,

buttressed dormer windows. The sky-line of Chambord could have been conceived only by an architect having Gothic tradition in his blood. In other matters, too, we find the Gothic habit surviving. The external winding staircase, for instance, was long preserved, and you may see on a dainty façade of the time of Francis I. the survival of the grouped shaft in a fanciful colonnette engaged on the face of a pilaster.

. . . . . .

The days of civil strife and butchery in which so many noble lives were quenched in blood, the dark days of the Huguenot persecution, were not auspicious for the growth of art, and with the close of the century we find life and spontaneity at a low ebb—little production, a tendency now to heavy monotony and now to barocque redundancy, and a lack of sense and fitness which admitted of masking with a ponderous classic façade churches built on the scheme of, if not with the forms of, ogival architecture. Officialism, too, in artistic matters was at hand, and soon that implacable organiser Colbert was to regulate the arts, also by Royal decree, and to found an academy which admitted only one saving creed. The frigid pomp, the artificial graces of the structures inspired by the "Roi Soleil"—majestic in the many-storied wig which

encircled his retreating brow—how far are they from the radiant daintiness, the joyous freedom of the palaces and pleasances which sprang up in the days and at the beck of that truly sunny Sovereign Francis I. !

Other Artistic Developments

To that period let us for one brief moment revert to notice, however summarily, the parallel development of painting and sculpture. In the latter art we have already recorded the names of Jean Goujon and Germain Pilon. These great artists were not without forerunners, of whom, no doubt, Michel Columbe was the most gifted, though his works lack both suppleness and definiteness of artistic purpose. I should name, also, Nicholas Bachelier and Giusti, the latter a family of Italians settled in Tours, but true to their nationality in the character of their work.

. . . . . .

Turning now briefly to painting we find in the sixteenth century but little to rejoice us. Yet a few considerable names redeem it from bareness. When Francis I. began to build he did not find amongst his countrymen painters to whom he could entrust the decoration of his numerous palaces.

The elder Clouet was, it is true, already prominently known, but both he and his more famous successor in the nickname of "Janet" were specially and exclusively painters of portraits. There were, of course, at the time a number of painters in the country; but whilst it may be admitted that Francis, in his keen admiration for everything Italian, may in some measure have overlooked native talent, it is difficult to believe that any very marked personality could have failed to assert itself in spite of the crushing incubus of the Italian influence—a baneful influence, be it said in passing, for it was not the influence of Raphael or of Leonardo, of Andrea del Sarto or of Titian, with all of whom the King was in more or less direct contact, but the influence of Cellini, mischievous for all his genius—and especially, through their long sojourn in the country, that of Primaticcio, Il Rosso, and Nicolo dell' Abate, which weighed on the art of France. Nor does the sixteenth century in France boast in painting, apart from the Clouets, any name of much calibre, except perhaps that of Perréal, and certainly that of Jean Cousin, a man whose dignity of artistic temper preserved him in great measure from the excesses of the school of Parmigiano."

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[NOTE.—The Appendix has been omitted in the references of this Index, and all but the more important of the notes.

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